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ABSTRACT

Many aspects of the teaching of writing are examined in this publication. The seven articles explore the importance of writing and list possible teaching strategies, report on books for and about writing that are currently available, present and discuss children's writing samples, discuss ways of stimulating creative writing in the classroom, offer an approach for helping slow learners work out their ideas first orally and then in writing, show how secondary students were helped to write about photographs and personal experiences, and present an exercise in handwriting. (GW)

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Teaching English

The Journal of Teachers of English in Scotland

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TEACHING WRITING

Ian Davison
Marion Mills
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Jean Lockley
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Colin C. Lamont

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He invites articles, reviews, original poetry for possible publication.

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SYDNEY B. SMYTH, M.A.
Director

TEACHING ENGLISH

Vol. 11 **No. 1**

IAN DAVISON
Getting them to Write: Why and How . . 8

MARION E. MILLS
What the Books are Saying 12

JOHN ROBERTS
'Sparkle and the Ventriloquist' 20

COLIN PEACOCK
Creative Writing—Fundamental or Frill? . 26

RICHARD BINNS
From Speech to Writing—A Teaching Technique for Slower Learners 30

JEAN LOCKLEY
From Experience Towards Structure in Senior Pupils' Writing 34

COLIN C. LAMONT
English as She is Writ: an Exercise in Handwriting 38

PETER KIMBER
Going by the Board 41

JOHN DAVIDSON
Language Across the Curriculum . . . 42

TOM SOMMERVILLE
Poems. 11, 25

NOTES AND NEWS 44

LETTER TO THE EDITOR 19

REVIEW

ROBERT PARIS on Reading 45
"Basic" English 48
Remedial and Reluctant Readers . . . 52
Small Group Interactions 54
Fiction 57
Scottish Writing 58
Lindsay's *History of Scottish Literature* . . 61
Drama and Myth 65
African Writing 65
Primary 67
Beyond the School 70

Illustrations CALUM CAMPBELL
Editor SYDNEY SMITH

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Scottish Central Committee on English

The third Scottish Central Committee on English was constituted and had its first meeting in June of this year.

What is the SCCE? It is the body appointed by the Secretary of State to advise upon and promote development in English. It is one element in a structure for curriculum development whose principal body is the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum.

Members were selected by the Consultative Committee on the advice of its Appointments sub-committee. Because reconstitution of the Committee was overdue, the Appointments Committee adopted an exceptional procedure in order to speed up the process. Advice was taken from members of the CCC, from the Inspectorate, from the interim SCCE, from CITE and, through CITE, from regional advisers and regional authorities. In making its final selection the Appointments Committee bears in mind such considerations as size and type of schools, their geographical location and the balance between practising teachers and other interests in the teaching of English. The interim SCCE, which held the fort between the demise of Richard Hendry's committee and the reconstitution of the new group, strongly advised the reduction of certain categories in order to increase the number of practising teachers on the committee. It further advised that the teachers chosen should be involved in regional development work, so that there might be created a chain of communication from the SCCE through regional development structures to schools and their English departments. A glance at the membership and the posts held by members will confirm that these recommendations have been heeded.

How does the SCCE relate to the rest of the national Curriculum Development structure? The SCCE is one of a range of central subject committees which report to the Committee on Secondary Education (COSE). COSE in turn reports to the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, the Secretary of State's principal advisory body on the whole educational service.

The relationship here summarised is a new one which makes the position of this SCCE different from that of its predecessors. COSE is a new tier in the structure whose creation reflects the growing awareness of the need to

look at the secondary curriculum as a whole, and not simply in discrete subject terms. Its creation, moreover, recognises the need to find a locus for development of aspects of the curriculum that span several subject areas (environmental education, language in the whole school, health education etc.).

The existence of COSE means that the SCCE will have less autonomy than former Committees. Its proposals will have to be "cleared" by COSE in the light of its sense of whole-curriculum priorities and it will be asked to undertake tasks initiated not only by itself but also by COSE (or originating elsewhere in the system and processed by COSE).

What is the position of CITE in relation to the new SCCE and the new national structure? Here a major change is envisaged. Till now CITE has been the executive arm of the SCCE, its director a full member of the Committee and ex-officio, its secretary, and the Centre management has been undertaken by a sub-committee of the SCCE. This relationship is maintained, but only temporarily. The CCC is endeavouring to create an integrated curriculum development service in which the four national centres (including CITE) will together service the whole field of curriculum development and support. How this is to be done (without, it appears, any additional funds being made available) has not been finally decided. What is pretty certain is that CITE will continue to service national development and support in English, but will be required to undertake additional responsibilities. This means, among other things, that the acronym CITE will disappear from use and the Centre will be rechristened—a small change but a sad one.

More important, however, is the fact that the direct links between the SCCE and CITE (or whatever it is to be called) will be severed.

The new system has a powerful logic, but may have disadvantages as well. The pace of development may be slowed down as proposals work their way up and down the system, and this slowness may engender frustration among members in the lower echelons. It is to be hoped that in practice as much autonomy as possible will be afforded to each element in the structure. It is certainly the CCC's (and the SCCE's) wish to be as responsive as possible to what teachers in schools perceive as their needs in curriculum development and support. It remains to be seen whether the new structure will work more effectively than the one it replaces, which, for all its flaws and anomalies, had achieved considerable fluency (deriving from use and wont, if not from logic) in its operation.

Below are shown the members of the SCCE along with brief accounts of their experience and the posts they presently occupy.

Andrew Johnstone, M.A., Chairman. Taught in Kilmarnock Academy, Jordanhill College, Arbroath High School (as P.T. of English). Now Adviser in English, Tayside Regional Council. Was a member of S.C.C.E. sub-committee which produced *Scottish Literature in the Secondary School.*

James A. Anderson, M.A. Taught in Douglas Ewart High School, Newton Stewart, Biggar High School (as P.T. of English). Since 1973 P.T. of English in Lanark Grammar School.

Getting them to Write: Why and How

IAN DAVISON

Principal Teacher of English,
Knightswood Secondary, Glasgow

One of the better reasons given in the past for the school emphasis on the skill of writing was that the pupils out of school put in more practice on their oral language, and the school should redress the balance. The same justification was used for stressing the formal registers instead of the more familiar styles of everyday conversation. If we assume that being able to "write," *i.e.* compose, is a worthwhile accomplishment, then the traditional emphasis was correct, at least in theory.

And I would like to suggest that plenty of practice in writing down ideas is still easy to justify on several counts. First of all, it is recognised now that learners can best explore and master new concepts when they are encouraged to produce (orally or in writing) their own formulations of the ideas, rather than merely try to absorb other people's formulations. There should be a process of dialogue between the learner and the teacher (or other learners); and the key activity in the process is the learner's own improving attempts to report the state of play in his struggle with concept and language. The special contribution that writing-down can make to this process is fairly obvious.

Only simple sequences and clear combinations of ideas can be grasped fully if they flow through the ear on the current of oral time. Good songwriters all know that. If we want to express more difficult groups of ideas, we set them down more securely, in space, in the form of writing. We can then *see* and *check* whether they lie happily together. We can double-check and treble-check, and also have other people *point* to the strengths or weaknesses, whether logical, idiomatic or aesthetic. The medium is *not* the message, but the medium of writing is the most convenient, the cheapest, and the most effective way of testing and re-creating our mental grasp of life. Writing also aids the learner's confidence by acting as a clear outward token of his ability to conduct part of the learning dialogue *with himself.*

To sum up the first count on which writing is crucial, if we want to give pupils an active *grasp* of ideas and feelings, we must at some stage get them to write (and re-write) them down to *look* at.

The second reason is the need for people in a complex but democratic society to "write back" as well as "talk back" to their leaders, administrators and specialists. Literacy is too often seen as, and especially measured by, the ability to read only; that is the capacity to be fed with ideas and attitudes by other people. This tendency is partly caused by the fact that reading is easier, though still ultimately impossible, to measure. The pretence that we *can* measure mental skills reliably is easier to keep up for "reading ages" than for the more complex and active process of writing. Why not "writing ages?" Because the very concept is evidently unworkable. Commonsense about writing suggests an emphasis on diagnosis rather than measurement. (I do not intend here to go into questions of how to "correct" writing or how to cope with the workload).

If you are to read *well,* of course, you must be "critical" of what you read. It can be just as active a process, in its way, as writing. But the effect, if not the intention, of the way writing used to be taught was to discourage *active* participation in formal discussion of social policy, which was mostly conducted in writing. The school emphasis on attractive, stereotyped script and on formal correctness ensured that the majority of people were reluctant to put pen to paper, and unable when they did so to concentrate on the matter rather than the manner. While they were influenced by what their betters wrote, they seldom wrote back. If "democracy" is to be more than the five-yearly presentation of a blank cheque to one ruling group or another, we should equip our pupils to flood the inadequate correspondence columns of the Press, and other channels of opinion, should they so desire. The letters are already the most consistently read part of many newspapers, but they are restricted usually to one "letters page." Why not a newspaper consisting entirely of letters-to-the-editor?

The creation of general political policies is not the only social use for writing skills. Mere administrative efficiency is favoured by writing, especially when speed is not essential. Our law courts, for example, accord a very high status

to written evidence. Our executives, managers and officials in all fields treat even a hand-written communication with much more respect than a phone call. They see most letters, whereas they frequently evade phone calls. Should we teach our pupils when to make copies of their letters, and when to say that they are sending copies to other officials or representatives? (Should we even look forward to the day when our pupils will demand hand-written replies to hand-written letters, instead of the circulars and typed letters produced by clerical serfs to intimidate enquirers and save the precious time of the mighty? Or should we teach everyone to type?).

writing ... provides a convenient and reliable record for future reference

It is not, however, merely social convention that accords writing a key administrative role. The fourth reason I would give for the importance of writing is that it provides a convenient and reliable record for future reference. In this connection, we should perhaps go out of our way to give pupils a good training in laying-out, placing-in-order, entitling, sub-heading, listing, indexing and filing.

The case for writing rests for the moment.

The problem is that teachers of English have suffered a bad attack of honesty. We have faced the truth that *in practice* the old school attitudes to language were widening rather than bridging the chasm that "the average pupil" were also prejudicing him unnecessarily against was supposed to leap: between everyday registers and the more formal usages. These attitudes writing, since it seemed to be an activity inevitably conducted in the least homely varieties of the language. In reading too, an exclusively formal diet put pupils off, but the insistence on a narrow range of acceptable language affected the active skills of writing more than the passive exercise of reading.

Various ways of closing the psychological gap are now being systematically pursued. (1) We encourage the pupil to do more talking in the classroom, especially as preparation for writing. (2) We allow the pupil to talk in less formal registers about subjects which we ourselves would tend to treat in more self-conscious language. (3) We allow the pupil to write, sometimes at least, in styles not usually associated by educated adults with writing.

These approaches all seem valid, though they pose certain difficulties. This gradualist technique is quite sophisticated, and its educational impact often barely perceptible. The pupils, parents and others, and even many teachers, need reassurance and explanation that some education is actually happening. In particular, people of a generally conservative turn of thinking find it difficult to "pander to" forms of language which undoubtedly have inferior social status, which they do not respect, and which they are asked to tolerate for educational reasons of an elusive kind.

Another problem is in deciding precisely *how much* writing should be done by a particular pupil or class. Presumably, with some pupils even in secondary schools, we could be tempted to spend little or no time writing. I prefer *not* to play down or avoid writing, even initially. Instead I try to treat the efforts of poor writers with appreciation and tolerance. With that proviso, I suggest that the rule-of-thumb should be to devote at least a quarter of a pupil's time to writing (and a quarter each to: speaking, listening and reading). This simplified concept is also a useful focus for general staff discussion of one aspect of a whole-school language policy.

Anyway, it is clear that we can take measures to avoid actually putting the pupils off the very idea of writing. How do we go on to enthuse them about the business? We have got the pupil to the water. What will make him/her want to swim?

A number of strategies are available to the teacher, and in practice it does not pay to reject

any of them entirely or permanently, either in deference to methodological fashion or even to genuine educational preference.

(a) There is the appeal to mere social expectation vested in respect for the teacher's leadership and authority (and in the examination system). You are advised to feel guilty but unrepentant about employing this type of gambit when pressed.

(b) The pupil(s) may wish to communicate with the teacher as a person. The pupils are often ill-advised in their choice of favourite teachers, but choose they do, and also confide.

(c) Emphasis can be laid on the patterned coherence of a planned group of assignments (theme, project, unit study, anthological project, etc.). The aesthetic appeal of the whole tends to give a rationale of a sort to the parts. This is recommended for conservative people who value form as much as content.

(d) There is the connected attraction of presentation. The finished written material is given to the world in forms which are themselves impressive, interesting or novel to the pupil. This approach is good for teachers who are hoarders of paper, cardboard, ink-duplicating materials, spirit duplicating materials, heat copying items, projector materials, scissors, staplers, pencils, pens, rulers, drawing-pins, sellotape, rolls of polythene, envelopes, school notepaper, etc., etc., etc.

(e) The stimulus is obvious of an audience other than the teacher, inside or outside the school. This technique suits teachers of Guidance, people in Category (d) above, schools with no tannoy system, and teachers who aspire to being literary editors. (Even a collection of snippets, well edited, can be impressive to the pupils and to a real audience).

(f) Still, we should not discount the stimulus of the sheer make-believe of "playwriting," in which the pupil enjoys writing as an imaginary character to other imaginary characters. Do not abandon the imaginary-community project, especially the short one, and the one which springs from recent classroom reading with the class.

(g) The pupil needs the opportunity (and may welcome it) to explore further in writing his/her ideas and feelings. Perhaps exploration will lead to clarity. This direct writing-as-learning approach results from good stimulus material and/or oral discussion.

(h) The desire to imitate is fundamental. We should not be blinded by the connotations of a shallow and light-hearted activity which the word "parody" has acquired. Imitation and emulation play a vital role at all levels of education and creative art. The accurate imitation of form should be seen as a challenge, but originality of content is essential.

(i) Some particular formulations more than others of a given concept or experience are bound to be more stimulating to the pupil. This consideration relates especially to (g) above.

(j) Some topics are bound to be more interesting than others to a given pupil or class. Do not sneer at the "new canon" of classroom "winners." But avoid works which foster self-pitying or anti-adult attitudes, unless you can subject them to full discussion.

(k) The pupil may wish to make records of certain events or achievements. For example, we have in our department a whole range of report forms for class-library reading. Some require little writing, some demand brief factual comment, and some are open-ended assignments in literary criticism.

I am not suggesting that the teacher ought to provide writing work which fulfils all these criteria; nor that the methods have no drawbacks, especially as sole approaches. Rather, I want to imply that effective stimuli are available; in sufficient variety to combat the staleness of custom.

For example, I defend the imaginary-community project, as an option, against recent attacks, arguing simply that if it is handled tactfully, it is educationally valid. That is, the "community" should not be completely remote from the experience of the pupils; and their efforts to express themselves imaginatively in-character and in-context should be treated with tolerance and encouragement, concentrating on opinion and content rather than on plausibility or consistency of register.

I do not expect anyone to be stunned by the novelty of these remarks, for novelty have they none. I am concerned more to ensure that teachers should not feel either guilty about pressing the writing skills in the electronic age, or frustrated by attacks on any particular teaching strategy that they sometimes employ intelligently in getting pupils to write.

Practice Teaching

At three o'clock the tutor settles down,
Gets out his notebooks, inspects the student's record book,
Looks out the window, discusses with himself
The culture of graffiti on the walls.
The pope, if primates take advice, is receiving
More than is quite theologically sound
(Cardinal sins perhaps).
Rangers are doing well but lack the interest
Engendered by what Jane S. is currently
Alleged to have, and give, in plenty—
According to Wee Roy. B.W. is still in love
With (true T.C.) A.D. No, stroke that out M.B.
A cynical retort nearly escapes the tutor
Who by contract is not cynical in college time.

Fourteen boys and sixteen ancient girls attend,
Perched dangerously high on what pass for shoes
En masse, a ROSLA class is something else
The girl who's teaching them—
Perched dangerously high on what pass for shoes
Is, like a tombstone, dedicated—you can tell—
Something about those bright and eager eyes
Suggest a love affair with sociology.

The lesson lumbers off the ground:
Its aims are reasonable, the questions reasonable
And the poem used is quite a good one.
Just at this point a pupil, until now silent
And apart from chewing jaws, quite motionless
Stirs and asks a question:
"What are we daein' this *fur*?"

And the tutor makes a little note
In the notebook that he takes to schools
For making notes.

TOM SOMMERVILLE

'Writing is Fun When You Know Why' *or* What the Books are Saying

No aspect of English teaching has been more discussed in books than the teaching of writing. Inbuilt into every English course book are assumptions about the same topic. Mrs Mills' article offers readers a way through the forest.

MARION E. MILLS
English Department, Moray House College

The ability to write with reasonable competence has traditionally been regarded as one of the indicators of literacy and, despite recent challenges to its importance in view of technological advances, writing continues to have a central place in the concerns of teachers and the expectations of the public. It is not surprising, therefore, that a large number of educational publications concern themselves wholly or partly with the theory and practice of writing, and its proper place in the curriculum. Partly because of the challenge of technology, and because of a new understanding of language, writers seem increasingly aware of the implications contained in my main title, which is a statement by a pupil quoted by William Harpin in *The Second "R"*. Harpin's view is that "A child is too often left in the dark about what the business is for. The purposes of writing and the audience it is intended for remain unexplained or, in schools, interpreted very narrowly."[1] This article examines some of the books for and about writing currently available and considers some of their implications for programmes in English and other departments of the secondary school.

In the last twenty years, a model of English that focuses on language and personal growth has become increasingly influential in Britain. This has superseded earlier models that concentrated on skills and cultural heritage. A succinct summary of the implications of these models is offered by John Dixon in *Growth Through English*: "During the skills era, operations specific to the written system of language became the centre of English. The heritage era put 'skills' in their place as a means to an end. But it failed to reinterpret the concept of 'skills' and thus left an uneasy dualism in English teaching. Literature itself tended to be treated as a given, a ready-made structure that we imitate. . . . And this attitude infected composition and all work in language."[2] The current model is concerned with how man "in sharing experience with others . . . is using language to make that experience real to himself."[2] Within this general model, an important influence on writing has, of course, been exerted by the "creative" writing movement. There has also been a general acceptance of a division of writing into two broad categories to represent the expressive and communicative aspects of language, variously referred to as personal/impersonal and imaginative/factual. Since the late sixties, the work of certain British writing research projects has been published and this, too, indicates the continuing influence of the model. Against this general pattern however can be set a slight change in the educational climate, with a resurgence of worries about standards and basic skills. Some of the newer course books reflect this trend.

Before starting my review, it is only fair to indicate the bias in my own approach, as far as I am aware of it, for my perception of other people's views and assumptions is inevitably conditioned by my own perspectives. My position on writing is perhaps best summed up by William Harpin in *The Second "R"*, where he offers "a summarising proposition about writing: it should come *from* experience, *for* an audience, *with* a purpose."[3]

Course Books

I look first at a selection from the range of available course books, since their steady popularity suggests that they are likely to have considerable influence on the kinds and amount of writing done in English classes. I can, of course, comment only on the structure of the books as offered in print for systematic use. Generally, they share certain broad characteristics: most provide as a starting point extracts from mainly modern verse and prose; most are firmly structured in a recurring pattern of sections and subsections; most are part of series designed to cover the early and middle years of

secondary school; many declare themselves designed to cover work for examinations set in England. Most of these features may well give the teacher, at least, a sense of development in a subject not linear by nature, but one is uneasily aware that such a sense is externally imposed and that the individual pupil is not always given the means of internalising knowledge and experience, thereby making them his own.

My first group covers the early volumes of certain of the series, for it is at S1 that pupils learn what to expect from English departments. I begin with W. M. Smyth's *Discovering English*,[4] which offers a very tightly scheduled journey with a somewhat overpowering courier. After the literature extracts come the language exercises in a generalised context. They concentrate on the writing conventions, punctuation in particular; the structure of the sentence, vocabulary extension and paragraph construction. Continuous writing tasks are kept to the end of each section. In the early volumes, this writing is limited mainly to imaginary exciting adventures and to rewriting in one's own words versions of prose passages provided. Letter-writing is always for an imaginary audience in an imaginary situation. Regularly, suggested paragraph structures are provided. There are opportunities for talk, but these are strongly oriented towards public speaking. It is presumably intended that all pupils in the class will work on a section at the same time and more or less the same rate. One fears that the result of such an approach is likely to be "formula" writing. In summary, this type of course book might illustrate a point William Harpin makes in *The Second "R"* when, referring to speaking and writing as searches for meaning, he says: "This cannot be known until it is discovered, when the language is produced and its effect on the intended audience noted and interpreted. Yet in schools, we sometimes seem to proceed as though the reverse were true: the discovery being made, language is produced like a net to hold it. Children are filled to the brim with information, told, or advised, which pieces to choose, their order and emphasis, even the form the writing is to take. It is little wonder . . . that personal discoveries of meaning are rare; the search for it has never been allowed to begin."[5] Also apposite is a comment by Marie M. Clay in *What Did I Write?* Though written about infants learning to write, it has something to say to secondary teachers: "Observation . . . suggests that [children] do not learn about language on any one level of organisation *before* they manipulate units at higher levels. As a child learns to write there is a rich intermingling of language learning *across* levels. A simplification achieved by dealing firstly with letters, then with words and finally with word groups may be easy for teachers to understand but children learn on all levels at once."[6]

These comments are relevant also to a series that has been widely used in schools, R. Mansfield and Keith Newson's *The Art of English*.[7] The chapters in these volumes are also firmly structured in sections, moving from reading to language exercises to continuous writing. The authors reflect the influence of the growth of "creative" writing, for they state that they intend their reading and talking sections "above all as a stimulus to written work." They certainly offer a fairly wide range of writing opportunities, stress the need for personal response, encourage the activation of the senses, call for close attention to detail, and offer examples of other children's work. Even so, one is again aware of a great weight of author-exposition presenting, as it were, templates for the apprentice writer. The pupils who can handle the language exercises that abound in the Certificate volumes, in particular, have probably already mastered writing constructions more complicated than those presented for their consideration and practice. Are the exercises there to satisfy the *teacher's* need for order and sequence in presentation? Many of the exercises involve little language generation, many of the continuous writing tasks—such as the letters to imaginary readers—are artificial, and the intended audience for the writing seems all too often the teacher-tester who will check how well the pupil has learned the lessons of the chapter. In volume G2, the author gives evidence of knowing about the power of expressive/narrative writing in children's work. His attitude to it is quite clear: "Do *not* let your instructions change to a personal account."

No one would quarrel with the aim of advancing towards language competence, but the predominant method of both series mentioned so far is expository, suggesting a process of learning by what is currently being called "transmission."[8] One might offer at this stage a contrasting approach, suggested by Anne and Peter Doughty in *Using "Language in Use"*: "A context must be created in which pupils *need* to write as part of some activity that will

really engage them . . . there must be [an audience] and some end-product of the work. . . . The actual shared use of written material is a crucial part . . . of working towards more accurate forms of the written language . . . only when written material has been used [is] the 'necessity' for accuracy revealed."[9] The importance of the teacher's part in this process is not undervalued, but the methods are different. The importance of the teacher's treatment of the end-product is stressed by many authors, including Anthony Adams and John Pearce in *Every English Teacher*.[10]

This kind of "workshop" approach to writing, along with the influence of "creative" writing, is to be found in the early volumes of Rowe and Emmens's *English Through Experience*[11] and in Hodgson and Richards's *Living Expression*.[12] The former series does offer a recurring pattern of work, but there are significant differences of emphasis, since the sections are thematically organised and writing is the first activity. The writing stimulus is followed by advice on preliminary note-making; recommendations to make lists of words and phrases; stress on the value of self-correction of work—"You learn best if you yourself put [it] right," and opportunities for redrafting after a series of activities designed to extend vocabulary relevant to the context. There is stress on doing rather than being told and on the importance of discussion before writing. There is also an extension of the audience beyond the class teacher. *Living Expression*[12] has a similar approach, and makes an attempt to help pupils appreciate some of the differences between talking and writing, along with their respective advantages and disadvantages. Other series that recognise writing as one of a number of means of communication and expression are Yglesias and Snellgrove's *Mainstream English*[13] and Garth Boomer and Morris Hood's *A Junior Secondary English Series*.[14] Both are particularly attractive in presentation and both cater for work at class, group and individual levels. The latter stresses its desire to be "extremely flexible," a concern shared by compilers of source packs, for example Peter Abbs in his *English Broadsheets*.[15] *Mainstream English*[13] hedges its bets by offering "some work in punctuation, linguistics and grammar . . . as a check for diagnosis and revision," but G. P. Fox and B. A. Phythian, the compilers of *Starting Points*,[16] another book offering a form of "workshop" approach, are prepared to omit "detailed exercises in grammar and comprehension." They give considerable stress to literature because they believe "that the best writing in schools derives not only from observation and experience but also from the enjoyment and discussion of literature." Nancy Martin, too, makes use of literature in *Truth to Tell*, the second of the *Oxford English Source Books*.[17] Her method of preserving the original stimulus of the literature she begins with is to keep the practical "Notes, information and suggestions for individual work" to separate Appendices. The suggestions for writing that follow the prose and

. . . stress the value of personal response

poetry extracts stress the value of personal response. The flow from the stimulus of good literature to discussion to writing is not, therefore, interrupted.

The books I have so far considered are only a few from the wide range available. The same can be said of my selection of single volume books for middle and upper secondary classes.

Clements, Dixon and Stratta's *Reflections*[18] has been very popular, to judge by the number of times it has been reprinted. Its technique of using photographs "to suggest new understanding of human experience" has been very influential. In this volume, opportunities for creative writing are offered immediately after the extracts and discussion points. Formal/impersonal writing is included in a separate section at the end, thus emphasising the distinction between the types of writing and their treatment that the authors wish to make. Eric Williams' *People*,[19] another volume which stresses flexibility in use, offers many suggestions for writing, with a weighting towards the personal/imaginative category. A broadly similar writing balance is offered by Jean and

David Cailes' *Think, Talk and Write*, though the style of presentation is more formal.[20] R. B. Heath's *Impact Assignments in English*[21] has a greater variety of suggestions for factual writing, but leaves the teacher to deal with teaching the necessary forms.

A concern that pupils should understand about form in writing is natural to English teachers, especially those who teach senior classes, and many would share William Harpin's uneasiness when, speaking certainly of younger children, he says: "Paradoxically, the very richness and variety of occasions for writing conceal a real danger for teachers. The eye and mind are taken by the diversity and fail to notice a restriction in the *kinds* of writing explored by pupils . . . children often see a single demand behind the variety of surface inducements to write. . . . The most frequent outcome, in functional terms, is a loose kind of expressive writing, occasionally with narrative form, having 'I' as the centre."[22] A "workshop" approach to writing does not deny the importance of form, but statements such as this one from the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life*, can get distorted: "The solution lies in a recognition . . . that a writer's intention is prior to his need for techniques,"[23] as can a statement, in *Assessing Compositions—A Discussion Pamphlet*, such as: "We do not think anyone can instruct children in how to 'realise' their experiences in words, how to shape them, how to 'choose' words or to use varied sentence structures before they write their compositions."[24] One must keep in mind this kind of remark, also from *A Language for Life*: "Though in every instance the need should create the opportunity, *the teacher ought to ensure that in a given period of time the pupils cover certain features of language*. . . . We must emphasise that everything depends upon the teacher's judgment and his ability to ensure that what is taught meets the needs of the pupil in his writing. Explicit instruction *out of context* is in our view of little value." (My italics).[25]

One of the most interesting books offering the teacher insights into the handling of form in writing is L. Long's *Writing Exercises from 'Exercise Exchange'*.[26] The use of the word "exercises" is misleading, for what is provided is a series of assignments designed to help students to internalise the processes from Pre-Writing to Rewriting. Also concerned with both the purposes and devices of writing is T. M. Brown and Robert Millar's *Put it in Writing*.[27] This is one of the few books slanted towards the requirements of the S.C.E. Higher examination. A number of the units in Doughty, Pearce and Thornton's *Language in Use*.[28] also give some help with this, as with a rich variety of other aspects of writing. Articles dealing extensively with *Language in Use* have already appeared in *Teaching English*[29] and I would refer readers to them.

In my second paragraph, I mentioned the signs of change in the educational climate. Two recently-published course books concentrate on the skills required for examinations and "no messing." One of these, E. L. Black and F. E. S. Finn's *Full Circle*, makes the compilers' position very clear: ". . . it is clearly the English teacher's job to help his pupils to write correct and appropriate English that will not disconcert a reader by its ignorant errors, careless mistakes or unsuitable prepositions. . . . There need be no apology for bringing back the use of a few technical terms, for knowledge of such terms is an essential if currently neglected part of English. Anyone who receives letters of application for posts in industry . . . cannot

. . . noticeable decline in standards of literacy

fail to realise that there has been a noticeable decline in standards of literacy."[30] It is interesting to set these comments beside those of Denys Thompson in *The Excitement of Writing*: "Mechanical accuracy in the writing of English . . . will come or will not come, with maturity, and there is very little that teacher or textbook can do about it."[31] Full circle indeed!

The other volume recently published and quick to go into a second edition is Rhodri Jones' *A New English Course*.[32] It is subtitled "An Approach to 'O' Level English Language for Individual Study or Class Use" and is thoroughly utilitarian in tone—including a section entitled "How to Work." Each unit is

firmly structured, and there is plenty of sensible advice on handling the kinds of writing the student will be tested on, but the method employed is exposition followed by practice. That feature, plus the sheer weight of material, suggests that the book is best suited to adults in further education courses.

In this review of some of the course books currently available I have, as I stated at the beginning of my article, concerned myself only with how they handle writing. Of course, most of them are also concerned with reading and comprehension, and many also offer programmes for talking, acting and research, but these are outwith my present concern.

"Creative" Writing

This term for writing of a spontaneous or near-spontaneous kind seems to have stuck, though often challenged on the ground that all writing is creative. The influence of this movement is well known. As Harpin puts it in *The Second 'R':* "The change of emphasis was simple, but profound in its consequence. Instead of writing *about* something, children were asked to write *from* something. Subjects were replaced by starting-points; the closed 'composition' gave way to free exploration of experience."[33] Among a number of books, Margaret Langdon's *Let the Children Write*[34] still powerfully conveys the author's enthusiasm as she speaks of her methods of "intensive" writing and her aims—to achieve honest, direct involvement and avoid falseness and sentimentality in her pupils' writing. Her examples are eloquent testimony to her success. Another book which amply illustrates what children can achieve is Sir Alec Clegg's *The Excitement of Writing.*[35] In the Foreword, Denys Thompson admires "the vitality, the enviable sharpness" of the writing included. This book is also valuable for the accounts of the methods used by the teachers involved. Three books produced for primary schools also have valuable suggestions to offer the secondary teacher: Barry Maybury's *Creative Writing for Juniors*, Lane and Kemp's *An Approach to Creative Writing in the Primary School* and Geoffrey Roberts' *English in Primary Schools.*[36] Recently published for secondary schools is Grady and Wilcockson's *Creative Writing in Practice*,[37] which offers a systematic account of the procedures involved from the preparation of materials to the point at which the pupils take the initiative and work at their own pace. This book is interesting for the stress it lays on talk before writing and for its "workshop" approach.

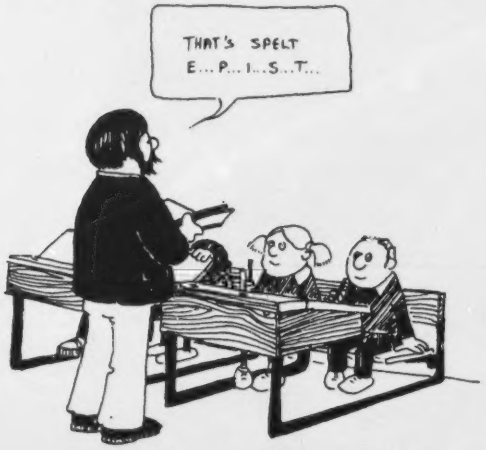
Increasingly, however, the position of "creative" writing in schools has been challenged. Harpin in *The Second "R"* considers that "Much of the inspiration of the originators of the movement was lost, so that creative writing sessions became as formalised and sterile as the composition lessons they replaced."[38] *A Language for Life* is sceptical about "the value of this emphasis where it is at the expense of other kinds of writing."[39] Jeanette Williams in *Learning to Write or Writing to Learn?* states firmly: "I think we need *less*, not more, writing in schools, of *any* kind, even—or perhaps especially!—of the creative kind;—'don't *look* at it or Sir will make us write a poem about it'!"

Be that as it may, the term "stimulus" has come to stay, though it may now have wider implications, and teachers still look for stimulating contexts for writing. Harpin in *The Second "R"* offers a revealing classification of stimuli, considers their merits and dangers, and concludes: "In providing contexts for writing . . . we must try to anticipate what they might give rise to and the most direct method is to write from them ourselves, at the stage of preparation and, more influentially, simultaneously with pupils. This, and other advantages of participating in writing, are convincingly attested to by the teachers quoted in Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson's *Patterns of Language.*"[41] His parting shot comes from Janet (fourth-year junior)—"Mr H. wrote a poem with us yesterday and read it out. I liked the title very much."

Writing Research Projects

The importance to writing of the child's experience, his sense of audience, and his growing ability to handle various functions are among the conclusions of the Schools Council Writing Research teams that got under way in 1966. The original team took as its starting point the needs of research into children's writing stated in the Schools Council's Working Paper No. 3 *English, A Programme for Research and Development*: ". . . to analyse the abilities required for written communication . . . to research into the *development* of writing ability . . . to ascertain the range and kinds of personal writing and the relation with impersonal writing . . . to know the advantages of 'experience-centred' as distinct from 'language-centred' teaching of composition . . . to know how to teach children to translate the emphasis, tone and intonation of spoken

English into effective written English."[42] They published their results in *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*,[43] which describes how they went back to first principles in psychology, epistemology and linguistics, and eventually developed a theory not just of discourse but of



. . . first principles in psychology, epistemology and linguistics

language and learning. As Nancy Martin, one of the team, put it earlier, in *Talking and Writing*[44]: "We are gradually becoming aware that we are after a much bigger fish than literacy: a veritable White Whale—talking and writing to learn, not learning to talk and write." Their focus was on the *process* of writing and this is discussed in general terms in the particularly illuminating second chapter of *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*, which begins wryly: "We are all familiar with the struggle to express in writing what we have in mind."[45] It goes on to divide the writing process into three stages—"conception, incubation and production"—and finishes by considering the parts played by memory and revision.

The team sought a model which would allow them to classify "within a theoretical framework all the kinds of written utterance which occur in schools . . . [and] . . . to trace the stages at which school students acquire the ability to modify their writing to meet the demands of different situations and thereby move from one kind of writing to another."[46] They arrived at a model with two categories, audience and function. The former was sub-divided into four main categories, ranging from "Self" to "Unknown Audience," while the latter was subdivided into transactional/expressive/poetic. Chapter 11 of *A Language for Life* contains a helpful summary of these and some of their implications for classroom practice. One of the team's most interesting discoveries about their original sample of scripts was that 48.7% of them were for an audience of teacher as examiner. Another was the very high proportion of "transactional" writing in subjects other than English and R.E.

The theoretical model and the results of processing the sample scripts have underpinned the work of the allied developmental project, described in *Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum 11-16*.[47] This group have been particularly concerned with exploring the role of "expressive" writing in learning in all subjects because, as stated in *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*: "Not only is it the mode in which we approach and relate to each other in speech, but it is also the mode in which, generally speaking, we frame the tentative first drafts of new ideas. . . . By analogy with these roles in speech it seemed likely to us that expressive writing might play a key role in a child's learning. It must surely be the most accessible form in which to write . . . [and provides] very favourable conditions for using the process of writing as a means of exploration and discovery."[48] Other books by members of the teams and those associated with them include *Talking and Writing* ed. James Britton; Barnes, Britton and Rosen's *Language, the Learner and the School*; James Britton's *Language and Learning*; Burgess *et al Understanding Children Writing*.[49] They have also produced a series of booklets dealing with aspects of "language across the curriculum."[50] This phrase became the title of Chapter 12 of *A Language for Life* and the concept has become one of the current growth points in education. Harold Rosen has written on the subject in "The Language of Text Books" in *Talking and Writing* and Barnes, Britton and Rosen's *Language, the Learner and the School*. There is also an N.A.T.E. booklet *Language across the Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools*.[51] There is evidence, too, that there is growing interest in what one of the booklets calls "cooperative" learning.

Before leaving these allied projects, I should mention that Jeanette Williams's *Learning to Write or Writing to Learn?* offers "a critical analysis and evaluation" of both. While giving them a cool reception as curriculum theory and research, she considers them "right in some of

[their] assertions about practice . . . there is indeed too much dreary writing going on in schools. . . . Teachers often seem to feel that a lesson is not complete, or the children are somehow being allowed to 'get away with it' unless they are made to write something down 'before the bell goes' . . . teachers should justify every request . . . for writing on a rational basis."[52] Her tightly-written little book, with its critique of the projects, suggests that once again we begin the inevitable process of becoming aware of what we lose or distort to take for granted with each new direction we take.

I finish this section with a brief reference to a third Schools Council Project, *English 16-19*, led by John Dixon. This team has recently produced a Discussion Booklet *Opportunities for Writing* at 17+[53] which has a number of pointed questions to ask about the effect of examination syllabuses on the range of writing produced by senior pupils and urges the need to get away from the dominance of the literary critical essay created by A-Level English.

As I approach the end of this article, I am aware that I have made no specific mention of projects and specific writing difficulties. The potential of the project approach has been well and fully handled in a recent edition of this magazine[54] and advice on the latter subject is available from the text and bibliography of *English for Slower Learning Children in the Secondary School*.[55]

I began with a quotation from William Harpin's *The Second "R"* and I shall end with one which seems to sum up much of the thinking in recently-published books on writing in schools: "A concern for purpose and audience, for patterns of development in language mastery, for the effects of context on writing, for the treatment of writing and action to ease the learner's difficulties, is the foundation on which a policy for writing may be elaborated with some confidence."[56]

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Keeping Options Open.
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Letter to the Editor

ANYONE FOR LINKLATER?

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DEAR SIR,

I have been involved for some time in teaching for and examining English literature at "O" level in Wales. In my capacity as examiner, it occurred to me that Eric Linklater's novel *The Men of Ness* would be a splendid book to set at this level and I initiated attempts to persuade publishers to provide a good educational edition of the book.

This attempt has failed because the publishers say they have found little interest in the proposal in Scotland and have estimated that there is likely to be only a "modest response" from Scottish teachers of English.

If this is so, I am astonished that such a book and such a writer can be discarded and their enormous potential wasted. The novel is set in Orkney, it's by a Scot, its theme is bound up in Scottish history—it seems obvious that if it were going to be adopted anywhere it would be in Scotland.

Is it possible that the publishers' agents spoke to the wrong people, or misinterpreted the evidence? It's quite evident to anyone south of the border who looks into *Teaching English* that there's masses of enthusiasm and a great deal of splendid work going on in Scotland in relation to the teaching of Scottish literature.

I should be grateful to hear of any interest in Linklater's work at school level in the hope that a publisher might be persuaded to produce educational editions of this and perhaps some of the other novels.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL PARNELL, *Senior Lecturer in English.*

Editor writes: According to the usual sources of information the following novels by Eric Linklater were in print at October, 1977.

House of Gair (Orkney edition). Cape, 1953, 90p.
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'Sparkle and the Ventriloquist'

JOHN ROBERTS
Summerhill Academy, Aberdeen

At one time or another, most of us will have had to read through two or three hundred essays done for "O" grade, or estimate "O" grade or just for the yearly exams. It's one of the most depressing activities of the year and I try to avoid it by filching the interpretations to mark. Usually in such a batch of essays I find less than a dozen that have any kind of "sparkle," to use the SCEEB word. By "sparkle" I mean individuality—some story, idea, turn of phrase, wit, irony, perception that indicates an idiosyncratic, jaunty, introspective, curious, cuddly human being wrote it.

... most of what I do ... is ineffectual

These essays are the regular annual reminders that most of what I do in my English classes is ineffectual. Year-long I sustain my illusion that the neat ironic ending I pointed out, the accurate image I focused them on, the use of telling detail, the structure of the paragraph we analysed, the precise observation through the senses, the portrayal of character, the description and atmosphere—the illusion that all this is absorbed and, by a process of lexical photosynthesis, finally generates a quantity of poetic glucose. The illusion is a survival technique. We must believe that what we're doing leads to some improvement. Or are we to ignore the end-products and be content that all these processes are good in themselves: the writing practice, the reading, the language study, the mutated lit. crit.?

Children do a lot of writing in schools. Some might say that this is because it requires less teacher energy, or because it's a fine control mechanism and secures at least some task attention, superficial though it may be. My own rudimentary investigations into what is written by children across the curriculum shows that about 80% is either copied from the board or from a book or from the teacher's dictated notes. Hardly ever is a child allowed to use writing to express his own reactions to things. He's occasionally allowed to talk about what he's doing in the classroom but invariably when it comes to getting out the jotters the teacher is metamorphosed into Moses, ensuring the tablets get carved. The ink exercise rules, O.K.! Cumulatively, in lesson after lesson, the message gets home to the child: writing is for other people's ideas and conclusions.

And this is what the Bullock report found, too. It uses the three categories of writing devised by the Schools Council Writing Research Unit. These are Transactional, Expressive and Poetic. Bullock 11.6: "The expressive is the central one. It is language close to the speaker, often the language used by intimates in a shared context. It relies upon a reader's interest in the writer as well as in what he has to say. Because of these qualities it has great educational importance, since it provides the tentative stage through which a pupil's new thinking must pass on its way to the comparative certainty of knowledge. This transitional process represents a continuum from the Expressive to the Transactional . . . which demands greater explicitness in the writing, a more pressing concern for accuracy of reference. The other continuum is between Expressive and Poetic where the writer finds organisation and formal patterning more and more essential to the fulfilment of his purpose."

The Development of Writing Abilities, a huge analysis of writing in schools, showed that the transactional function of language—for recording facts, explaining, restating information etc.—was the one which dominated the child's writing experiences. It took up 60% of all his writing. In Science, History and Geography it was about 90%. "Curricular aims directed attention towards classificatory writing which reflects information in the form in which both teacher and textbook traditionally present it."

This, then, is the school context for the

writing which occurs in the English class. But then the Schools Council team came up with the following analysis of written work done in English classes:

34% Transactional
11% Expressive
39% Poetic
26% Miscellaneous

The Bullock Report survey also found that only "a third of 12 year olds and slightly fewer of the older pupils spent time on writing from personal experience. It was most common amongst 14 year olds without examination objectives but this was not equally true of the 14 year old remedial pupils." These three massively significant statements about the priorities and methods of English teachers are hidden away on page 435 of the report. Over the page we find out what the pupils are doing instead of writing expressively. Are they, as the Black Paper writers and their myriad supporters imagine, making up slide-tape programmes? cavorting about in ill-organised groups doing improvisations? doing their own thing? developing into crap detectors? forming Searle-like classrooms of resistance?

No.

Table 92 on page 436 states about English classes:

> Proportion of time spent by 12 and 14 year olds on copying and reproductive work and written corrections.
>
> All 12 year olds 32.8%
> All 14 year olds 33.8%
> 14 year old exam 32.0%
>
> 12 year old remedial 48.6%
> 14 year old remedial 47.1%
> 14 year old non-exam 40.7%

All this took me some time to digest. Presumably the English teachers who allowed their pupils to write expressively for only one tenth of their written work found that this proportion produced successful writing. And presumably those whose pupils spent one third of their time on copying and reproductive work felt the same. But where does all this leave poor old Alec Clegg, John Dixon and the great 60s movement away from the restrictions of exercises and artificially formal English? I was brought up pedagogically on *The Excitement of Writing*:

> "Personal writing in schools is neither a luxury allowed by indulgent teachers, nor a form of psychotherapy, but a mode of expression that children practise readily, deriving confidence and fluency from it and stocking up for their 'recording' work when it is called for in History, Science and so on . . . we should help pupils to sincerity rather than superficial brilliance." ("Personal" here means much the same as "expressive"—"when writing about his personal experiences, impressions or imaginings, relying on his own store of words to do so.")

How much should we as teachers interfere in the child's writing processes? Should we just let them get on with it? I remember walking into my first year class one day with a cumbersome but well-prepared lesson plan in my head and decided, as I crossed the threshold into all that liveliness and irreverence to most things scholastic, that I was barking up the wrong tree. As I walked to my desk I announced that as soon as I gave out the jotters they would all be embarking on writing 40 page novels. I did not exclude remedials or define novel. Three weeks later each child had produced a novel, a third of them over 40 pages. And they all seemed to enjoy the protracted freedom. What's more, the quality of writing produced was the same as that produced after all my "normal" teaching lessons. Another fillip for the door-handle lesson.

On the other hand, I would not deny that a lesson taught on a particular writing technique can get a child to experience the "sheer satisfaction of *making*, of bringing into existence a pleasing verbal object" (Bullock). But is it any more than ventriloquism? If 39% of writing in an English class is "poetic" a lot of it will be (as Bullock again puts it) "colourful and fanciful language, not ordinary, using 'vivid imagery.' It is often false, artificially stimulated and pumped up by the teacher and written to an unconscious—or conscious—model which he has given to the children. It is very often divorced from real feeling."

In this state of some confusion, I began to look more closely at the writing my pupils were doing. (This can be as depressing as marking examination essays). I wanted to figure out a little more precisely what kind of writing pleased me, what writing I felt had been worth doing.

Here, to begin with, are some examples of "untaught" writing, *i.e.* they just got on with it. These are the opening paragraphs of a first year novel:

Ray Oldfield was addressing the meeting in the gang hut on 26th January 1974.

Now you may or may not know that that there has been a suggestion by the council to knock down the ruined castle, which would mean a lot of the animals and birds we feed very often would be homeless, so I vote that we try to do something about it. Stuart suddenly turned round on his old crate and said, "Why don't you go and see Mr Smith he's a big shot in the council. "Why just me why don't we all go. "Oh Ray you know we don't have enough patience for that" said Mark who was Stuart's older brother and never paid much attention and probably couldn't be bothered going. "We'd have the old bag don in within one minute of our arrival." In a way Mark was right none of the gang had much patience for matters with as much importance as this had. "When will you go Ray," said Sandy who never said much he just sat on top of an old rickety table talking to himself when he did say something.

This is very seductive. The handwriting is clear and neat; she knows what spelling and punctuation and syntax are about; we know when and where we are; there's dialogue and characterisation; and the vocabulary isn't too limited. But when I look at it more closely it seems very derivative—it's a carbon copy of those nice Enid Blyton books where articulate children—with an occasional sortie into the picturesque colloquial—set about a bit of socially responsible nature conservation by a gang democracy that would be the envy of Mrs Gandhi. Each character has a little endearing childlike quality to offset the frighteningly sophisticated way in which they take on the bureaucracy or the bullion thieves. Style and attitude are confident, bland and patronising: "In a way Mark was right none of the gang had much patience. . ." It's all so confident, so bookish. Here's a successful, pleasing and industrious pupil whose own voice has been lost as she seeks to conform to the models she has read. Sadly, it's not what I'm pleased by.

Here's a piece from another book-oriented child, second year this time. (He always writes about gerbils.)

The year is 1977 and the date is February 3rd, I think. This is the most amazing story ever told by man, or woman too. It all began with a young boy working hard in his lavatory oops I mean labratory making a drug which he called "bleedin strong stuff."

It is now complete, now for the ultimate test. He walks over to a small cage and takes from within it a female gerbil, he then places it on the table and takes a dropper and half fills it with the drug. He then stuffs it in the gerbil's mouth and squeezes. The beast spluttered and fainted in his hand. Then suddenly he felt a rumble in the palm of his hand and the animal's eyes opened, they were bright red. The boy stared in amazment as the beast gnashed into his thumb he screamed and dropped the gerbil and it rolled off the end of the table and plummeted to the floor.

It lay there for a while and then suddenly it kicked with its hind legs and went skiting across the floor and it began to grow and grow and grow it looked as if it would never stop. The boy ran for the door and remembered that he had locked it. He picked his nose and started banging at the door and shouting for help but it came too late. When his father got there and unlocked the door he had been crushed to pulp by the beast's growth.

The roof of the building cracked and the walls split and splinters flew everywhere then everything turned to rubble. The gerbil now at its full size bounded off along Mastrick Drive towards the city centre of Aberdeen destroying everything in its path. It was now mid afternoon and hundreds of people began to panic as the monster destroyed the Cosmo picture house in the middle of "Rollerball." The scene was tremendous as it ate the statue of King Edward where all the little pigeons do their daily dung. It then bit the head off a lady who was standing at the corner winking at it and spat it right through C and A's window.

Three police cars came screaming down the street with their sirens wailing and calling over loudspeakers "Clear the Streets." People ran to nearby buildings for protection. The gerbil was now at the bottom of the skyscraper at the Gallowgate and with one bound she had reached the top and began to gnaw at the rim of the building.

By this time helicopters were on their way loaded with gas bombs to subdue the creature. When she first saw the strange machines coming towards her she was very curious but when they started dropping bombs on her she became very alarmed and began to drum her hind legs. The building began to crumble. It eventually collapsed completely. She tumbled head over heels and crushed Marshall's chemist shop. She lay apparently lifeless for several minutes then, without warning, she jerked violently and rose to her feet and staggered off towards the west of the town. It was later reported that she was heading for Hazlehead woods. An hour later a search party came upon her diminishing and puzzling tracks. They led to a rocky, sheltered corner of a clearing where they found her fully recovered from the drug, happily nursing her four youngsters, blissfully unaware of the havoc she had caused in the city of Aberdeen.

This, too, has all the good literary qualities but you get a strong sense of the writer as well. He seems to be enjoying his imagination more, to be going his own narrative way, having a bit of properly childish fun with his lavatorial asides. I don't think an adult could have written that story: is that a workable definition of "sincerity" in a 13 year old?

The next passage is chapter 5 of a first year novel:

THIN ICE

We went over a piece of ice that was thin. Mike fell into it and landed on a sleeping polar bear. The teeth of bear tore out the seat of his pant. His bacside didn't half freeze. The ditch was not deep.

The "snowball" came after us. Bruce fired the tranquiliser gun at it. The dart hit it fair and square on the conk. The brute tired out and collapsed. Thud it fell

at our feet we skinned it to patch Mikes breeches. The bear woke up and ran. He must have known how Mike felt.

Soon we found it frozen. We had fresh meat. Mike sewed in the patch of fur. We buried the rest of the bear to preserve it. We set off again next day and took the bear with us. Other Arctic beasts smelt the dead animal. We used the other guns to kill them. Mike had another thicker patch for his breeches. We reached the coast and killed a few walruses and made a few knives with the tusks. The skin made tents which were warm. One thing was wrong. They always blew away in a blizzard. The meat off the walrus was better than the bear. More thin ice was in our way. We shattered it to find icicles sticking up like spikes. If we'd crossed we would have been goners.

Here is an appealing mixture of sci-fi gadgetry, realism, fantasy, slang, boyish bare backsides, survival techniques in the Arctic, and a good grasp of story line. Only John could have put it all together in this way—it's him, his interests and knowledge, and his way of writing. Presumably he'll have it drummed out of him sometime with lessons on register, structure and narrative. But at the moment he's blooming, unconfined, and I like his enthusiasm and eccentricity.

This lad is strong enough to resist even my "pumped-up" lessons, and I want now to talk about "taught" lessons. An example is the BabyBio type session. BabyBio sessions are those "creative" writing lessons where we first forcefeed vocabulary on some chosen topic into the pupils, then we nurture their delicate literary roots with a fine mulch of metaphor and meter, and finally we blanch them, wrapping their own responses in a package of alien words making their poems more white, delicate and tender in flavour. I was doing one of these sessions on "words of movement" and after it all the *Thin Ice* boy came up, inviolate, with this piece about his hamster:

A hamster, a small, energetic little fellow.

Moving like a sledge across the table top anything in his path. (My mum's towel). Bobbing up and down eating seed. Lumbering like a Juggernaut with pouches full of food. Passing he makes a meal of the dog's nose or ears. (The dog has one and a half ears and a nose with multiple nostrils!).

Climing on the bars of the cage he plays Tarzan. Hanging by one foot (his back one) he lets go. On the way down he knocks over his food and water bowls. (Pest!).

Running and sliding along the table behaving like a menace can't keep his teeth out of anything. Things like my thumb (ow!).

On the wheel in the cage he goes like a bomb nonstop for hours on end. The tail goes from side to side.

The wheel comes out of his cage and I lay it on the floor with the beast. He goes into the wheel and runs like mad. Our dog will sniff at Buster (no wonder he got his name) and bite his nose. If his food box is lying flat on its side he will climb inside it and gobble (greedy).

Maybe all the teacher can claim is that he set up a situation where the hamster was observed for the purpose of writing about it; and that the child succeeded in doing this in his own original way *in spite of* the teacher's carefully choreographed song-and-dance routine about "words of movement."

Here's another, also a first year pupil, who survives:

CHILD STROKING A CAT

Slowly walkes over the boy bends down to her
Putting his hand out slowly.
Tutches its forehead and gently
The cat gives a pure
Down crotches the boy again
He puts his hand on her back
Up goes the cat's backbone
The boy gets a fright
Tuches him again
Up goes his fur, the way he pushes it
Down lays the fur the other way.
The cat stands up walks round the boy's leg.
It tickels said the boy
Its fur was soft and gentle.
Its eyes were big like a tigers eye.
It griped the ground with its claws.
Someone opened the door out went the cat.

But how many other pupils fall by the wayside, succumb to the blandishments of the teacher's technique, try conscientiously to give him back the pretty trinkets he angles for? This kind of approach to writing must produce a striving after effect, an artificial colouring of language. The child learns that images can produce more vivid writing and so duly produces:

"I heard a noise. It was like the school alarm going off" when she describes the sound of two cats fighting. One of the cats has its back "as arched as an old-fashioned door."

The teacher as ventriloquist can go even further. I enlarged my "words of movement" theme with a session on surfing. The first year class was split into groups of three, each with a photograph of surfers. My carefully programmed set of oral questions focused their attention onto different aspects of the scene: the shape and movement of the waves, the board and the surfrider. I asked for images and descriptive words. Each group produced its own list of words and phrases and then I filled the board with the most intensely vivid and imagined ones. Then each individual wrote his/her own piece. Finally came the "squash and squirt"

routine: squash all the best ideas together and squirt out the ineffectual ones. (I did a couple on the board as examples).
Here's a pupil's first version:

Roaring seas, waiting, waiting
for a surfer to come along,
the sea starts to roll and rolling,
the surfer (who) is brave
is on the crest of the wave.
His agility, his skill is helping him to live.
The nose starts to dip and his skill cannot save him.
He falls and tries to dive to safety.
His board floats out into the sea,
Never to return.

And now for the "squash and squirt" version:

Waiting seas, rolling seas,
Brave surfer
On the crest of a wave,
Agile and skilful.
Nose dips—
Wipe-out.

Here's another lad's final version:

The sea sprays
over the cliffs.
It dips and bends,
spraying in anger.
Scared and moshionless
balancing
arms spread wide
like an albatrosses wings,
he crouches like a timid mouse,
knees upon the skimming board
darting up and down
the wave crests.

This is the sort of stuff that wins prizes but it's 100% Acrilan, all artificial fibre. It's almost another version of dictated notes: using other people's ideas and language. If we look at these poems in terms of process and product, we are forced to admit that the artificial process completely nullifies whatever qualities the product might have. It may be "poetic" in the sense of made, patterned, but how much of it is the writer's? It is more something the teacher can pat himself on the back for, print in the magazine, and talk about as a good job well done. Sometimes, the writer manages to rescue himself. From a sea of descriptive verbiage he surfaces desperately for a lungful of fresh air. We see his own set of references instead of the literary teacher's:

IN THE JUNGLE

Crept threw the forrest
carefully and light footed.
Hear drums like heads banging on trees.
The flames like devils' tails.
Darkness falls,
arms wide like sails of a yacht.
Water sparkling like the reflections of the fire,
canoes pointed and carved like bananas.
Crack! a stick has broke,
hear rustle of vines.
Something moving swiftly and silently.
Like I had bionics,
away into the undergroth.

No, instead of all this manufactured glitter give me the straightforward unpretentious voice of this second year girl's description of her fear of the Cyclone at the carnival:

All of a sudden I found myself paying the man at the desk. I hesitated and then just ran onto the Cyclone. I hadn't even considered what effect the whirling Cyclone might have on me. I looked down as we began to move. I felt a thrill go up and down me, I was a big girl at last. As the Cyclone began to move faster and faster, I got more and more frightened. By the time the Cyclone was at full speed I was absolutely terrified: my stomach was churning, my head was whirling, my feet felt icy and my face was burning. My eyes were nearly staring out of my head and my face was as white as a sheet. I opened my eyes and the tears started streaming down my face. I was so rigid with fear, I half sat, half lay in the corner of my seat. My heart beat like fury and my face was [illegible]g all hot and flustered. I was really panicking. I tried to pull myself together, but couldn't, I held my breath. I was absolutely terrified. The only sound I could hear was the other people on the Cyclone who were screaming. To my horror I couldn't even scream or see anything, I was so scared. All I thought about was hanging on to the protective bar which was keeping me in just and no more. I thought that awful ride would never come to an end. At last it slowed down. I tried to get off but fainted. Somehow now the fair has lost all its magic for me.

Or this sad, simple account of a visit to the hospital:

A time I felt scared was when I split my chin. I was six at the time. I was walking along a wall beside the beach bulavard. It was one of those walls which was built like stairs. Like an idiot I was staring about in a daydream. When "Crash!" and I fell flat on my face. At first I thought that I wasn't hurt but my mum soon noticed my chin was bleeding. We walked down to the beach and the nurse there said I would have to go into hospital for stitches. Well that just done it, I started to run away from my mum but she caught me. My dad came down in his car and drove us up to hospital. Everything was quiet and it gave me the creeps so I stood up and I started to run again. My dad said "Sit down and behave yourself or I'll crack your ear." Then a nurse came and said next please. I thought to myself Oh no I'm away to get stitched. Two lady nurses were in the room. One of them said we'll have to stitch his chin up. I said "Youre not going to shove any needle into me. The nurse said I'll put on stickys and ointment. One of them gave me a tetnus injection. My mum asked if we would have to come back and the lady said "Don't bring that horrible child back to me." I said "I wouldn't come

back anyway." When we got outside my mum told my dad what had happened he was really annoyed. He banged the doors around, He said I was a coward and I suppose I was really making a fuss all about nothing.

In these two pieces the emphasis is on the experience, on trying to communicate what happened and what it felt like. And the writers tell it naturally. These are not bookish or literary pupils, not particularly attentive or industrious either. But they seem to be writing with a real purpose—they haven't got an artificial glow through intravenous feeding.

Maybe we take a lot of potential "sparkle" out of children's writing because we tell them too often how it's to be done. Pumped-up creative writing lessons may be more stimulating than the course book structured writing approach but both have the same result: to stifle the natural voice. Perhaps the English teacher's activities at the Poetic end of the writing continuum are as damaging as other teachers' activities at the Transactional end. The bit in the middle—the fundamental Expressive language—gets little opportunity to appear, even in English.

We are perhaps so concerned with "teaching" that inadvertently we often blot out the child. This is a cliche but a Biology teacher recently gave me a good example of it. Normally, dealing with the behaviour of voles, he showed the voles to the pupils, talked about them and then gave the class a worksheet to complete. He received the usual brief, chaperoned, restricted answers: a fairly normal teacher routine these days in any subject. But he felt there was something missing. Next time he showed the voles, talked about them, and the pupils watched. Then he simply asked them to write about the voles. Most children produced two to three pages of their own observations, anecdotes and comments varied in style, content and approach. What was missing from the first routine was the child; now, given the chance, they all had something to say and said it in their own individual ways.

The lack of "sparkle," the dull writing we have to read so much of, is more than a symptom of too much teacherly interference. It is proof, (more than evidence), proof that the school curriculum doesn't try to receive the pupils as persons but just tries to teach them new tricks: tricks which most children soon lose interest in learning. We get them busily interpreting other people's ideas, busily mimicking other people's language; and we punish or reward according to how well they deny themselves. No wonder most pupils do not see themselves as important parts of the school process.

All you need is Love

Saying is of little use; spectacular, of course,
Very productive of great literary treasures.
Singing's seductive. Doing is worse.
Most of us move in irregular measures
More suitable for comedy or farce.
Tragedy, as a keen high-fretting pleasure,
Comes but too rarely for us chaps:
A disappointment (in blank verse) perhaps.

TOM SOMMERVILLE

Creative Writing—Fundamental or Frill?

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Although creative writing has for some years been accepted and approved by teachers of English and is now given formal recognition by the public examination system, there still seems to be some uncertainty about our ability to define and recognise it, and disagreement about its educational value. It comes under a number of guises—"creative" writing, "imaginative" writing, "personal" writing, "free" writing —and some unease has been expressed as to what actually distinguishes "creative" from "non-creative" writing,[1] not to mention one senior teacher, in my experience, who reached for his revolver on hearing the term, no doubt sharing with Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest the view that it means "writing down . . . whatever may drift into the mind without reference to arbitrary etc. concepts of intelligibility etc. or arbitrary techniques of grammar, punctuation . . . etc."[2] What, then, is creative writing and, if it is an important part of the English curriculum, why is it important?

An essential and clear difference between "creative" and "non-creative" writing is that the former is openly subjective in nature. As its synonyms suggest, creative writing is expressive of the individual personality of the writer in a way that is not normally associated with other writing tasks. It is something which grows out of the *uniqueness* of the individual and the events, people and circumstances of his life. The pupil does not slavishly imitate a model (although an element of modelling may influence the writing process, especially when a literary stimulus is used), or complete a formal exercise; he is not required to argue, discuss or summarise, nor is he expected to write dispassionately or objectively. He is asked to recreate in his imagination experience that is unique to him, to play with it and shape it and then give it expression in writing.

For me, then, the *subject-matter* of creative writing is the everyday conscious experience that each and every person idiosyncratically perceives and symbolically represents to himself through image and language. As R. M. Jones points out, our imaginations are ubiquitous; they come into play *after* perceptual events—"we alter the world, change it, play with it, make it up and over constantly."[3] Many children claim that they lack imagination; some teachers seem to accept this claim. But both seem to be labouring under the delusion that imagination is a gift that enables you to produce something entirely novel, often exotic or bizarre, conjured up, so to speak, out of nothing. Once the realisation dawns that we all have within us a storehouse of experience derived at first hand from our daily lives and at second-hand from what we hear, see and read (especially from the mass media) and that we can play with this endlessly in our minds to produce a story or poem, the task of creation becomes easier. Stephen Spender has expressed this view of the inter-relationship of experience, memory and imagination very clearly when he says:

> "It is perhaps true to say that memory is the faculty of poetry, because the imagination itself is an exercise of memory. There is nothing we imagine which we do not already know. And our ability to imagine is our ability to remember what we have already once experienced and to apply it to some different situation."[4]

Therefore, I would argue that all children have *within themselves* the subject-matter for creative writing and all of them possess the ability to mediate this subject-matter of personal experience through the imagination and through language. Clearly, there will exist among them individual differences in abilities to recall experience and represent it symbolically, but fundamentally they already possess appropriate material; the teacher does not have to *provide* it. If this is so, what more is needed to get pupils actually writing?

Very few of us are able to write in a vacuum, or write for the joy of writing. Children also need a focus, a source of inspiration and enthusiasm, an audience, a sense of purpose. All these the teacher must provide, as best he can. Every teacher will find his own way to achieve these goals, but the over-riding aim must surely be to create a classroom environment based on mutual acceptance and the exchange of relevant experiences in discussion. Perhaps an initial stimulus of some kind is

necessary, but more important, I feel, is the talk that follows which helps children to relate the chosen theme to their own experience, as they contribute to discussion or listen to the teacher or other pupils talking. Through discussion pupils' memories are refreshed and possible avenues for writing are opened up. Talk of this nature seems to me much more important in the stimulation of creativity than the dramatic methods sometimes advocated.[5] And, clearly, the discussion can take the form of whole class or group work, or individual discussion between teacher and pupil to help solve particular problems.

Once the imaginative processes have been triggered off, and a subject has been decided on, a number of choices present themselves to the writer. A fundamental decision is whether to write in verse or prose. Both, of course, are equally acceptable, the choice depending on the nature of the subject and the personality of the writer, but most children in my experience, unless specifically encouraged otherwise, tend to choose to write in narrative prose. But more important to the present discussion is the child's method of approaching his subject. Is it to be the truthful reconstruction of personal experience ("This is what happened to me on the night when . . .")? Or will it be an attempt to create an imaginary setting with fictitious characters, so that the writer attempts to project himself into the unfolding events and identify with his characters?

The former, the "egotistical sublime," is the easier method and in my experience the "average" child will write more readily using this approach, writing about himself and events that really occurred. The ways of "negative capability"[6] are more difficult and, I feel, require greater sophistication. It is comparatively easy, of course, to fall back on cliched imitations of popular writing, film and television (who hasn't ploughed through countless stories written by children about escapes from prison, heroic war adventures, bean-feasts in the dormitory etc.?), but it is very difficult to lose one's own sense of identity, achieve empathy with new characters and describe them and their situations with perception and insight.

However, there is no need to *polarise* these two approaches. Once the writer has realised that he can interweave and fuse both methods, he can begin to cloak fact with fiction, bring together from his experience events separated in time and place, embellish and transform the characters he has known, and dramatise or simplify what really happened. In fact, he can play endlessly with his experience, creating, reshaping, transforming. Who is to say what is fact and what is fiction? I have known children whose stories were, for me, totally lacking in conviction, but which they claimed as gospel truth, and I have read stories which I thought could only be the result of heart-felt personal

stories . . . which they claimed as gospel truth

experience, which were cheerfully dismissed as pure fabrication.

On the other hand, it might be argued, if we are prepared to accept the validity of our pupils' life-experience as subject-matter for creative writing, perhaps they will write successfully and effectively on any subject of their own choosing, without the teacher intervening at all. Why not simply give them a series of evocative titles or photographs, or a completely free choice, and invite them to write?

Although children may clamour for a free choice in writing assignments, my own experience indicates that when presented with one, they find themselves in a hopeless vacuum or retreat into the predictable regurgitation of material from television and popular reading. Also, as indicated earlier, I believe it is essential for the teacher to provide some kind of stimulus, a sense of direction, perhaps a framework of

ideas; the average pupil needs such help, provided that it does not become an explicit constraint, and the gifted child can ignore it if he wishes. Moreover, if there is a wide choice of subjects, it makes purposeful classroom discussion very difficult. What is needed is a theme of universal interest, which offers an almost infinite range of possible treatments, but which can focus discussion and encourage the exchange of experience and ideas. I have in mind topics like fear, getting into trouble, being an outsider, an incident in a crowd. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, pupils need to be encouraged by the teacher to write from first-hand experience about subjects which they remember clearly and vividly and which possess a certain emotional colouring. This sense of emotional involvement was stressed by Ted Hughes when he discussed creative writing in the *Listening and Writing* series some years ago:

> "Poetry is not made out of thoughts or casual fancies. It is made out of experiences which change our bodies, and spirits, whether momentarily or for good. . . . The work of most good poets is written out of some especially affecting and individual experience which they have undergone at some time, or perhaps which, because of something in their nature, keeps happening to them again and again."[7]

Once the pupil's interest in a subject has been captured, and memories of past experience have risen and begin to take conscious shape, once, in fact, he is ready and willing to begin writing, he is much more likely, I believe, to make serious efforts to overcome the inevitable problems of expressing in writing what he wants to say. And herein lies, I maintain, one of the most important values of creative writing; the process of writing itself is as important as the artefact produced. When the child is motivated to write and has within him the subject-matter of what he wants to say, clearly imagined and deeply felt, the words will come and look after themselves "like magic." Ted Hughes is again helpful on this point:

> ". . . simply imagine what you're writing about. See it and live it. Don't think it up laboriously, as if you were working out mental arithmetic. Just look at it, touch it, smell it, listen to it, turn yourself into it. When you do this, the words look after themselves, like magic. If you do this you don't have to bother about commas or full-stops or that sort of thing. You don't look at the words either, you keep your eyes, your ears, your nose, your taste, your touch, your whole being on the thing you're turning into words."[8]

To encourage this sense of emotional involvement is not necessarily to encourage explicit "confessional" writing. Children will indulge in such therapeutic writing, of course, and will have their own motives for doing so, and the products must be received with sensitivity and tact. But in choosing subjects to talk and write about, both teacher and pupil retain complete sovereignty over what they choose to reveal and what they choose to hide. And no one, I believe, would seriously wish to challenge this right.

Returning to my initial question, then, it should be clear that for me, at any rate, creative writing is not an educational frill. However, the principal aim of the activity, I maintain, is not to produce poets and novelists (although ample evidence exists in printed anthologies to demonstrate that young people are capable of writing with outstanding power, freshness and perception), and, although the activity may prove therapeutic, such therapy is unlikely to be the teacher's explicit objective. The true strength of creative writing, as I have described it, is that it is a process which encourages the child to bring together disparate elements of experience through the synthesising power of the imagination and articulate them through the medium of written language. As Edmond Holmes argued, more than sixty years ago, "composition exercises" should be "the genuine expression of genuine perception, which have behind them what the child has experienced, what he has felt or thought, what he has read, what he has studied. . . ."[9] It is this principle that makes creative writing of fundamental importance in the teaching of English.

In conclusion, let me try to sum up what I have been saying with a concrete example from my own classroom experience. The chosen theme was "Conscience;" the initial stimulus was a dramatic and sensitively written short story by a sixteen-year-old girl (called "Silly Little Girl").[10] In it she describes how she was caught shop-lifting by a store detective, how she managed to escape, and how for months she lived in terror of her parents finding out. To begin with, discussion centred on the story itself, its effectiveness, the way it is structured

and developed, its convincing impression of truthfulness in its description of the workings of conscience. Discussion then developed to connect the story with the pupils' own experiences of getting into trouble and the unhappiness that a guilty conscience brings. Finally, the pupils were asked to write a story of their own on this theme, treating the subject in any way they liked. Here is one version, by Brenda (aged 13): she was an average pupil, normally very quiet, perhaps a bit dull. It is not claimed as an award-winning piece of writing; it is closely modelled in structure on the original story, but it does have qualities of its own, I believe. What these qualities are, I leave the reader to judge for himself.

I remember when I was younger and rather a tomboy. It was during the summer holidays when two other girls and myself, clad in jeans and anoraks, set out to go fishing. We had only small fishing nets and large jam jars. We knew an ideal place, through several fields, where a small pond lay. We gradually made our way through a corn field, a wood and a field full of cows.

When we arrived, the shallow pond was deserted and we chose our positions and sat on the bank, swaying our nets up and down in the water, hoping to catch something.

After about an hour all three of us were standing in the pond with the water lapping half-way up our wellington boots, and with two jam jars full of tiny fish and several small snails. We were now becoming quite bored. On the opposite side of the stream was a very high hedge. We decided to explore and waded across the pond. As we pushed our way through a gap in the hedge we found ourselves in an orchard and every tree was laden with apples and pears. Without hesitation we climbed up a tree and began to pick the fruit.

Suddenly I heard a gruff voice behind me. I climbed down and looked around. I was alone and a man in a grey suit, carrying a rifle, came up to me.

"Hey, what do you think you're doing?" he asked.

I felt myself go all red and hot. My heart was thudding very loudly and my hand was shaking so much that the apple I was holding just slipped and fell to the ground beside me. I couldn't move or speak and I just stood there as the man said, "What's your name and address, eh?"

I stammered out my answer and he said very angrily, "Do you know you can be put in a home for stealing? I shall be going to see your mother this afternoon."

I could not stand him any longer, so I just turned round and ran. I must have been in a daze, for I didn't know in what direction I was going, but I ran and ran, until I found myself in the woods again. All I could hear was my heart beating loudly and it seemed to vibrate through my whole body. The leaves beneath me seemed to repeat over and over again what the man had said in the orchard.

I sat down beneath a tree and began thinking what terrible things were going to happen to me. They'll put me in a home where you only get a dry slice of bread for dinner and you have to be in bed at six o'clock. It would be in the newspapers, and I would be a disgrace to our whole family. No one would want to associate with me any more. I began to cry, and as I felt up my sleeve for a hanky I noticed my watch and saw that it was almost four o'clock. I decided to go home, after all I had to face my parents some time.

When I finally arrived home, I slowly pushed open the back door and stepped in.

"Wherever have you been? Your dinner is shrivelled up to a cinder."

"I've been fishing," I said.

"Well, you can go without your tea now and go to bed. Look at the state you're in!"

I sighed and went upstairs. A week later the man still hadn't come and mum had forgotten all about me being so late home that day. I felt relieved, but I didn't go fishing again, and the two friends who were with me had a good laugh when I told them what had happened.

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6. The terms are Keats'. See his letters to George and Thomas Keats, 22 Dec. 1817, and to Richard Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818.
7. Ted Hughes. *Poetry in the Making*. Faber, 1967, pp. 32-33.
8. *ibid*, p. 18. The quoted passage is taken from the original *Listening and Writing* pamphlet (BBC Autumn 1967) and is slightly different.
9. Edmond Holmes. *What Is and What Might Be*. Constable, 1911, p. 131.
10. Melanie Vanessa True. "Silly Little Girl" in *Children as Writers* (Award Winning Entries from the Seventh Daily Mirror Children's Literary Competition).

From Speech to Writing—A Teaching Technique for Slower Learners

Mr Binns's article article is an edited extract from a paper that he has prepared for C.I.T.E. The full paper which includes extensive examples of pupils' work will be published separately later this session as one of a series of C.I.T.E. publications on teaching English to slower learners. The specific technique here described is applied in a fully contextualised approach to the encouragement of written English of the kinds referred to in Mr Davison's article in this issue.

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(a) Introduction

TALK–LISTEN–REFLECT–DRAFT–EDIT–FINAL COPY

There should be nothing unfamiliar to any of us about the above order of events in the production of a piece of writing. It is what we all do, for example, when we write an important business letter. Admittedly, the "talking" and "listening" which precede reflection may in our case be often an internal process of weighing possibilities for inclusion in which no-one else is involved—but it must happen or we would be in no position to draft anything. Similarly, the editing process may on occasion (but not I think often) be done by us simultaneously with drafting so that the draft becomes also the final copy—but the process is not being missed by being internalised and remains essential to a satisfactory finished version.

It is in fact what happens at any time when we attempt to express ourselves through the written word; and applies indeed to occasions when we have to express ourselves in speech with greater care than usual. What I am suggesting is that this process is no less *necessary* to children in school if we ask them to write; and that we should deliberately teach them to use it as a routine instrument of learning.

The approach suggested below has evolved over the course of six years out of attempts to deal with the difficulties experienced by slower learners in written language. It at once meets the needs of pupils who, having experienced only failure in the past, no longer wish to perform tasks requiring writing; and those who are clever enough to be already, like ourselves, internalising some stages of the process set out above. It is especially useful therefore in a mixed-ability class.

(b) The approach in practice

To put the approach into practice a special use is made of the jotter. Instructions for the pupil are set out on the black-board:

Left hand pages (LHP) are for rough notes and drawings, useful words or phrases heard in class discussion, dictionary definitions, working out ideas, etc.

Right hand pages (RHP) are for successive drafts leading eventually to a final version.

Guide Lines for the Teacher

The *aim* is to encourage the pupil to give better expression to his ideas in written language; the *objective* is to enable the pupil to work out his ideas through speech and into writing and simultaneously to help him free his written language from errors in spelling, handwriting and the sequencing of ideas.

There are three stages: (i) making notes; (ii) editing/drafting; (iii) revising/self correction.

(i) *Making notes*

The teacher:

- tells the pupil to listen to others and to himself in the course of a class discussion.
- discusses the pupil's ideas with him so that he forms a clear picture of what notes to make.
- makes notes for the pupil if he is unable to make them for himself.[1]
- ensures that the pupil knows not to try to produce immediately a polished final version.

(ii) *Editing/drafting*

- the object is to leave the pupil to enjoy transferring words and ideas from the left hand to the right hand page.
- only if the pupil signifies that he requires assistance need the teacher pay attention to him.

in the event of failure to write, the teacher may select and discuss words and phrases for transfer. In addition, the teacher may write out some of the agreed words and phrases in sentences on the right-hand page.

if the pupil is unable to produce a clear version of his words and ideas on the right-hand page, adapt partially or wholly one of the two following courses of action:

(a) write out spelling corrections on the back page of the jotter.

instruct the pupil to copy these out twice, and then to rewrite the original version with corrections.[2]

to assist the writing of a further version, remove the right hand page and replace it on the left hand side of the jotter. This will expose the next right hand page for easy transfer of words and ideas. (Sello-tape the new left-hand page into place.)

(b) write out spelling corrections on the left hand page and on the back page.

re-write for the pupil the *original* version with corrections.

leave the pupil to read over his "new" version silently.

hear the pupil read over aloud the "*new*" version.

read over aloud the *original* version exactly as it was written ONLY if the pupil is ready to learn by *listening* to his errors. If he is not ready, read it as he meant it to be written to give confidence.

allow the pupil time to reflect. Deliberately leaving an interval of a day between drafting and re-drafting allows the pupil to go on thinking over what it is that he wants to say or write. After reflection he may return with a fresh impetus to write.

(iii) *Revising/self correction*
to be looked at in a moment.

(c) Advantages of the Method

Most of the advantages of this procedure come from the different kinds of support it gives the pupil.

(a) It recognises speech as the medium through which experience is first engaged, arranged and sorted into categories. The emphasis on both talking and listening as the necessary source of material for writing puts the slower learner at no disadvantage in the early stages. When he realises that the writing which the teacher values is simply a written form of what he already thinks, feels and expresses orally, he begins to think that writing may not be such an alien form.

(b) The unitary nature of thought, speech and writing is further reinforced when the pupil starts to make notes and draft his ideas on paper. It makes the thinking processes extrinsic to himself, lets him see how he can improve his ideas on a subject by having them in more control, being able to shift them around, adjust and reject until he finds the words which say what he really thinks and feels. The writing process therefore becomes more meaningful to the pupil himself.

This process helps all pupils. The disadvantaged child may build up his powers of concentration for he is able to hear in his speech and see on the page the progressive development of his thoughts and feelings. Those who are not so disadvantaged may benefit in other ways. Their linguistic "skill" may be such that they can and do produce a first draft that is satisfactory to themselves and, perhaps, to the teacher. Their schooling experience may have taught them *not* to be reflective, to short-circuit the process. The re-drafting technique will benefit them by encouraging that process to take place with a resulting improvement in the quality of their written English. It also can sharpen their awareness of their own vocabulary resources and their potential for thought and imagination.

(c) Success is built into the whole process. The pupil is given praise for what he can say or write and encouraged to build on that. The teacher recognises that finding words to say or write is a struggle, that it may appear disconnected and incoherent at certain stages, and instead of blaming the pupil for this, accepts it and gives the pupil encouragement to continue with it, giving praise for even minimal

success in finding words for what he wants to say.[3] Basically it is a matter of finding out what the pupil can say, wants to say, and helping him to say it.

Building up the slow learner's confidence —and therefore willingness to work— is a slow process. Unless success is built into it from the beginning, he won't persevere long enough to learn the benefits of application or reap its rewards. The process I have outlined helps not merely to improve his skills but to encourage such qualities and attitudes as application and perseverence.

(d) The skills of handwriting, spelling, punctuation, ordering of ideas, accuracy of vocabulary, are promoted as a means to an end but in a way which the pupil sees as relevant to his present purposes. The teacher *teaches* at the note-making and drafting stages once the pupil is motivated to find the best way of saying what he himself wants to say.

The time schedule and identification of the teacher's role can perhaps be made clearer by the following simplification of the process into into three stages:

Stage (1): Pupils learn how to use the LHP and RHP of the jotter for note making and drafting.

VARIETY OF CLASS ACTIVITIES OVER 3-6 WEEKS.	CLASS DISCUSSION/ GROUP DISCUSSION/ DEBATE ETC.
NOTE-MAKING— WORDS AND IDEAS ON LHP.	DRAFTING/ EDITING ON RHP.

Pay-off

(a) Pupil appreciates relevance of drafting approach and begins to anticipate task of editing—looking for meaning.

(b) Teacher has time to identify and assess strengths and weaknesses in the pupil's written language.

Stage (2): Teacher engages with pupil in the improvement of his skills.

VARIETY OF CLASS ACTIVITIES OVER TWO OR THREE MONTHS.	CLASS DISCUSSION/ GROUP DISCUSSION WORK WITH OHP[4]/ DEBATE ETC.
ENCOURAGEMENT OF (1) LISTENING SKILLS (2) WORD ACCURACY (3) VARIETY OF WAYS OF NOTING AND ORDERING THOUGHTS AND IDEAS ON LHP.	DRAFTING/EDITING ON RHP. DISCUSSION WITH TEACHER/CLASS-MATES/OTHERS. RE-DRAFTING/ CONTINUING FIRST DRAFT/MAKING FRESH NOTES ON a new LHP.

Pay-off

(a) Pupil is encouraged to reflect and take stock.

(b) Teacher helps the pupil at the stage(s) of the process at which he is finding difficulty.

Stage (3): Self-direction by pupil.

Pupils progress at their own pace using drafting approach as required.

Teacher acts as guide and introduces self-correction code (see below) as the need arises.

The slowest learners may spend a long time on Stage 1 whereas the brighter children will advance very quickly to Stage 3, sometimes making Stages 1 and 2 a mental process more than a physical one. The process however can be used even with the brightest pupils to bring their attention to syntactical errors, improvements to relevance, tone, mood and other advanced writing skills.

(d) Self-Correction—the next stage in the process

In order to make the amount of corrective oversight deriving from the LHP-RHP technique more manageable, the idea of self-correction of the final RHP version should be introduced gradually, to individuals or to the class as a whole.

Self-correction, apart from making the teacher's task lighter, is obviously justifiable in terms of pupil motivation and in the consciousness it gives him of the nature of his likely errors as thereafter he prepares to write.

Self correction involves the use of an aural check. To discover errors in an RHP final version, the pupil is encouraged to read his work aloud to himself. To focus his attention on particular errors he uses a checklist based on the following code.

CHECKLIST

Code	*Nature of Error*
( )	spelling
P	punctuation
NP	paragraphing
R	repetition or redundancy
SO	swop over[5]
∧	omission.

Using the Checklist with slower learners

Application of the code is varied to suit the difficulties of individual pupils. Should the pupil's errors be too numerous for ease of correction, the teacher may write out a corrected final version for him. If the errors are few he may not mention them at all but praise the child for the good things about his writing.

For the average child, an aural check of the RHP of the jotter by pupil and/or teacher can lead to agreement as to which part of the code to apply. It is important to remember that the teacher should not ask the pupil to apply more than two bits of the code at any one time. The more serious/repetitious errors should be chosen.

The teacher points out to the pupil that the process of checking for mistakes is subject to error, due to the fact that there is a tendency not to read over any final version accurately but rather from the sound of what he intended to write which is still in his head. This helps the pupil to stay alert to the unintentional errors of the written version.

Even at that, individual pupils may require to have the use of the code demonstrated in relation to their particular pattern of errors. In other cases small groups of pupils work together in editorial committees to correct each other's written language. With a little experience they are ready even to take an "outside work!"

With slower learners there are more initial difficulties in getting them to use the code and one of the following strategies may be required:

(i) In the event of failure to *see* any need for correction, the pupil is asked to read aloud the written language on the right hand page. It then becomes apparent how aware he is of his errors, and he can be helped to focus on them. Some pupils can read aloud their written language on the same day but not after a lapse of time!

(ii) If the pupil reads a different version from the original it is attributable often to the fact that he is extemporising from the sound of what he had wished to write which is still in his head. The teacher can then help him to see the difference to get him to employ the code on his written version.

(iii) If the pupil breaks off from reading aloud what he has written, his difficulty in deciphering is usually due to one of the following: poor handwriting, misspelling, mispunctuation, omissions or inappropriate vocabulary. This is an opportunity for the teacher to help the child with a specific problem which will allow him to continue saying what he has to say.

(iv) To reward pupils with severe difficulties in written language, reference should be made to their selection of a word or phrase or a particular clarity of thought. To assist them then to correct their errors, specific difficulties are singled out on different occasions for self-correction.

Further Notes

1. This means jotting down ideas *using the pupil's own spoken language*, if he is unable to jot down anything himself to get started.
2. The spelling study procedure adopted is to write out the word, cover it, write it out again from visual memory, and to check with the correct version. The pupil should be further instructed to underline the misspellings in his original version and/or to re-draft the original. (See M. L. Peters *Spelling, Caught or Taught*, R.K.P., 1976).
3. Especially praise success in reorganising groups of words or finding more appropriate words.
4. Work with overhead projector involves showing copies of pupils' scripts (anonymously) selected from a cross-section of the class, and reading them aloud with a variety of intonation and stress.
5. *e.g.* substitute another word, or vary the expression, or reorganise the word group.

From Experience Towards Structure in Senior Pupils' Writing

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This statement outlines some work carried out at Ardrossan Academy with pupils preparing for Ordinary Grade and Higher English examinations. It is not meant to be a definitive statement about the subject, merely the first comment upon some ideas which have been partially developed.

The terms "personal writing," "creative writing," "imaginative writing" are often used interchangeably in schools and this has tended to obscure and even confuse the function of these categories. Little positive attempt has been made to come to terms with them and much that is fanciful has been accepted as good creative work. More recently the terms "transactional writing," "expressive writing," "poetic writing" developed by the Writing Research Unit at London University Institute of Education have offered help in making us aware of the purposes for writing. Unfortunately, none of these terms help us to explore the whole question of "languaging"—choosing forms and modes of language appropriate to what one is doing rather than those modes of language expected by conventionalised thinking about writing. Both sets of terms may help us to assess our pupils' writing but they do not go far enough and they are not very helpful in the practical task of organising pupils' courses in writing. My argument assumes workable distinctions within these categories and beginnings have been made with four kinds of writing worked into a controlling framework.

Broadly, the argument postulates four writing categories contained within a hierarchy of function. These categories follow four levels in the process of thinking, from the concrete, the "here and now" of experience, to the more abstract, conceptual level of thought. The first category is personal writing and/or the use of group discussion. The initial personal response a pupil makes might be to a piece of literature, a photograph, a film, a piece of improvisation or drama, or a shared experience. In this first response we can expect that much is not made explicit because the speaker (writer) relies upon the listener (reader) interpreting what is said in the light of a common understanding (*i.e.* a shared general context of the past) and interpreting the immediate situation (what is happening around them) in a similar way to his own. Since this "expressive language" submits itself to the free flow of ideas and feelings it is relatively unstructured. The inexplicitness of the discussion and the elliptical notes of the initial written response represent language that is close to the self. The talk or writing is for oneself.

In a fourth year class we looked at photographs together. In one of them a man was standing on a boulder overlooking a river which was swirling over a series of rapids. He looked intently at the movement of the waters. We wrote down our first fragmentary impressions, and, with these notes as a beginning, we talked about the photograph. We noticed how intent was the man's gaze, how absorbed was his look. There was a close eye for detail, and a sense of wonderment and awe that the scene conveyed. We compared this man to ourselves. Here, then, was a situation in which our attention was focussed, a felt experience was explored, and insights caught by our perception, then held by our discussion. Our observation and discussion were part of the process of discovery, supported by the class and myself.

A fifth year class and I discussed and wrote about our journey by train to school from Largs to Ardrossan. In what way could this material be developed? On other occasions we talked about strikes, we read *Brighton Rock*, *Catcher in the Rye* and lots of poems, amongst other things. How can we deepen response in the varied contexts that we present for our pupils? At this point in the argument I think it is important to stress that when we make this initial response to experience, to photography, to literature, we must keep the visual metaphor in focus—the tough boy in the photograph, with the hard features, odd impassive eyes yet who cups in the palms of his hands the fledgling. One wants to share the apparent incongruity of the various elements; the toughness, gentleness, the innocence and

experience, the vulnerability of boy and bird. Merely to help with spelling and awkwardness of sentence structure is to deny the value of the experience.

If these notes that my pupils and I have been making in the various contexts are to be presented for an audience then there is a need for different qualities of style, rhetoric, allusion, tone and organisation. Although some people talk much as they think, still we scan, censor, select, re-name, re-organise before speaking or writing. The second category of writing and thinking is concerned with what happen*ed*, with narratives. It includes narratives, poems, personal correspondence, the personal journal, autobiography, memoir, biography, chronicle. Our sensations, perceptions, memories and ideas are the raw materials for narratives, reports, essays of generalisation and theory. The third category is concerned with what happen*s*, *i.e.* exposition and generalisation. This will include discussion, developing and continuity of ideas, gathering together a thematic collection of incidents, writing about reading selections, and out of the English classroom and into the Chemistry, History, Physics, etc. classrooms. The fourth category is concerned with hypothesis, what may happen, in other words, logical argumentation and theorising. At first children are limited in the kinds of writing they can produce and are reserved to those of categories one and two but as conception matures they add to their repertoire kinds of writing of increasingly higher abstraction (categories 3 and 4). Pupils cannot write sustained expositions and argumentations, but they begin with fragments of high abstraction embedded in writing of low abstraction and end with fragments of low abstraction embedded in writing of high abstraction.

From her notes on the photograph of the man looking intently at the river, one girl had the task of relating the man, his moment of decision to the background of the river and the rapids. She wanted to relate the inner—the man's thoughts—to the outer, the swirl of the river, the circling bird. She chose the monologue as the predominant form.

The river suddenly burst into life, tired of its earlier placid movements. Water rushing in profusion, hit jagged boulders and crashed down into a raging flow of brilliant, white foam. Sunlight caught at the spray and held it, suspended over the torrent before it vanished into wisps of nothingness. On and on it surged, turning bends in a snake-like fashion, furiously seeking its own end. On either side of the river, a thick belt of trees predominated the hillside. The summer had died long ago and the leaves were turned into shades of red and gold in a forlorn hope of regaining some of the summer's brightness. Above the tree-tops, an eagle soared against the clear sky, rejoicing in its contentment, basking in a world of glorious freedom.

A car was winding its way along the road. Every so often a streak of white showed through the gaps between the trees. It stopped suddenly in a clearing beside the river, the door opened and a man climbed out. His feet sank into the mossy turf as he stretched his limbs after long hours of travelling. His body was tall and straight, giving him a look of extreme agility. His face was a different story though. The furrowed lines deep in his forehead and round his mouth made him look far older than his thirty years. His eyes were haggard and his black hair had begun to recede, turning gray at the temples.

He wandered aimlessly towards the river and sat down on a rock. His feet dangled over the edge of the bank, getting slightly dampened by the river's spray. He remained quite still, seeming to be in complete oblivion of his beautiful surroundings. Another man's concentration would surely have weakened to the river's music or to the wind playing in the trees. But no, he sat on, frozen in thought.

His mind was going over the happenings of the past few days. On the Monday, he had learnt of his coming promotion—junior partner in a large, up-and-coming firm of solicitors. This was what he had hoped for, for a long time. Of course, it would mean longer hours, more responsibility, more work at home and Lord knows, he had enough of those things already. But it would also mean more money, a firm's car, and above all more power to do as he pleased. For years now, he had ached to sort out things himself, modernise the offices, deal with clients in a less old-fashioned manner. And now he had the power to do just that.

But he should have known that his happiness wouldn't stay for long. The night before last, his wife had left him, taking their two children with her. There had been no row, just a quickly scribbled note to say that she thought it was best for all of them if she went away.

Why had he been such a fool? For months now, his wife had been hinting about a separation. She had said that she hardly ever saw him and when she did, he often had work to do at home and literally ignored her and the children. He never took them out, he hadn't had time to take them away on holiday for years now.

"Fool, fool, fool!" he shouted, his voice reaching a piercing crescendo. His very life had collapsed round his feet—only a ruin was left.

His eyes focused on the turmoil underneath him and suddenly he realised how like the river *he* was, continuously striving for more power, never stopping to rest, little noticing the more important things, that were going on around him. He knew what he must do—refuse the offer of promotion, perhaps even resign from the company altogether and take a less taxing job, find his wife and children and even if it took years to do it, he'd make up for the misery he had caused them. Perhaps they would go abroad for a week's holiday (the girls would like that) and maybe move from London into one of the quieter suburbs or even into the country itself. Plans flashed through his mind and for the first time in many years he felt as free as the eagle which soared overhead. He stood up and made his way back to the car, turning round only once to look back at the river.

He got into the car and slowly it pulled away back the way it had come, the white paint glistening through the trees.

Julie is not discussing, not talking about the man's crucial decision. She is trying to be, in imagination, the man, and also to be herself, and most difficult of all, to do both things at once, or at least in close integration. She is developing a sense of language to examine honestly, without pretension, a subject in which her mind and emotion are genuinely concerned, and to give it tangible shape. Perhaps the reader finds the theme derivative and its treatment cliché but we should remember that Julie is discovering the theme in this form for the first time.

Suzanne Langer confirms what Julie has been struggling to find for herself:

> Some things need to be conveyed by symbolic schema rather than discursive language for sense—experience is a process of formulation. The eye and ear must have their categories of understanding. They select the predominant forms. This means that an object is not a datum, but a form construed by the sensitive intelligent sense-organ.*

Discussion within small groups helped individuals to decide how to present their fleeting impressions of their train journey from Largs to Ardrossan for an audience; to develop, expand, make clear these first impressions. Several made a fuller personal response. Controlling ideas were developed into poems. and many wrote descriptive-narratives in the third person. No-one felt in a position to write a sustained generalised account of the industrialisation of the Hunterston peninsula. So they selected what they needed, what they wanted to notice and what they had learnt to notice in discussion. As we were reading *Brighton Rock* the beginning of which describes how Hale feels isolated from the holiday crowd in Brighton after his arrival by train, it is not surprising that Eric begins:

> Jim Black was very nervous. He was grey and haggard, and he obviously hadn't shaved for some time. He was puffing away at a cigarette and one could see that his finger nails had been bitten away in anxiety. Could he get there on time? This was the only thought in his mind as the train draw slowly out of the station. He tried to forget by taking out his paper but found that his mind just kept coming back to that one thought. He put his paper down and looked around. He was alone in the compartment. It seemed an awfully dull, dreary, grey colour but maybe it was just the way he was feeling. The seats were covered with ash from someone's long extinguished cigarette and the windows, if they weren't covered with timetables or the like were a depressing grey, brown colour with all the exhaled smoke of a week's commuters. . . .

Hazel, on the other hand, writes a pleasing vignette in which she tries to convey the passing scenery through the eyes of Mrs Jones:

> A few hours previously it had rained for the first time in twelve days and the smell of fresh, clean air was blowing softly through the small ventilator windows, this, along with the to and fro motion of the train made Mrs Jones feel relaxed and content with life as she gazed out of the carriage window. A farmer and his dog were briskly walking in a field of sun-burnt pasture. A distant tiny, red car on a small winding road was losing ground as it seemingly tried to keep pace with the train. A clump of trees flashed in front of the window. A signal box with the station's name quickly appeared and disappeared. The horn was sounded and the train stopped at the station.

Perhaps there is too much an enumeration of detail to convince us of a unity of impression but she is aware of the effect she wants to create and the form by which to convey it. Our pupils have to use raw material like any professional writer—to control material and rhetoric. In the following excerpt Brian remembers the River Annick at Irvine which was rather different from what it is today. He has had to select details from what has left an impression and what stands out has been determined by many affective and cognitive factors:

> The synthetic undergrowth gropes and clings to the man-made banking, bare of all vegetation, poisoning the deserted river while the elevated motorway stands ignominiously triumphant like a swollen scar. The ignorant river flows obeyingly passed on one side of this "wall" while on the other the once river bed, when dry, is cracked, the small crevices like slit-mouths frozen in a mournful wail, and is only saved by the mercy of the rain which turns into a marshy bog. Littered tree-stumps, like grave-stones, stand stubbornly in a farewell salute and are epitaphed: "Ged O.K" or "San Toi" or whatever inspiration the inscriber had at the time. . . .
>
> Most of the trees still stand, some scarred with incendiaries, some hacked and hewn but none immune to the poignancy of vandalism. The fallen trees, semi-submerged in the river, and shrouded in foam, still provide an alternative crossing for the sure-footed and the agile.
>
> Sadly, gone is the sand-bank which was seasonably inhabited by sand-pipers. This sandy slope, honeycombed with pipers' and wasps' tunnels offered good protection and a seemingly permanent residence. . . . The land is not totally unrecognisable or desolate. It still has a wild natural look about it: the paths are protected on their side by two parallel rows of shrubs and bushes, the bramble-bushes grow in mass wiry packs and the bothersome marshes still stubbornly persist. . . .

*Susanne Langer: *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard University Press, 1957.

In another photograph I was concerned that the group try to capture a dramatic moment when a boy held a large stone above his head ready to dash it onto the legless, upturned wreck of a grand piano.

The grey sky hung heavily above them, the dull lifeless wasteland surrounded them and everything seemed still for a few seconds. Jamie held the boulder above his head and looked down at the wreck of a grand piano. His friends were watching him, waiting impatiently for the loud crash and hopefully for their sakes, the total destruction of the piano. The boys waited. Jamie's lip tightened, his feet were screwed firmly to the wreck, his arms felt strong and powerful. He eyed the piano carefully showing his intense concentration, his eyes glinting with excitement and then with all his strength he threw the boulder on the dirty, legless, tuneless old piano.

Sparks of wood flew into the air, and wreck fell into pieces. Jamie jumped away and ran to his friends and a wide grin spread across his face. . . .

So a sentence structure becomes an essay structure: an embedded idea, a framing idea. We have to differentiate between the pupils' capacity to produce a given piece of writing and the capacity to receive and understand it. Literature would precede writing, with a dialogue, oral base. Pupils learn continuously how to produce material successfully, to pitch the subject to the audience, to represent reality to themselves and to others. Writing means handling both dimensions at once.

This two-way process of working along the various levels of abstraction can be used to deepen our pupils' appreciation of literature. The process incorporates the movement from the "here and now"—the piece of drama, photograph, piece of literature—to a monologue by one of the characters, or a script of part of a scene, to a written, personal response to a piece of literature. After reading *One of the Virtues* by Stan Barstow, to help deepen our awareness of the narrative, we wrote a monologue uttered by the main character beginning with his last statement in the story: "This was the saddest day of my young life" which forces pupils back into the text to make explicit the full consequence of breaking Will's grandfather's watch.

We can think of a sequence of narrative types ranging from interior monologue to the dramatic monologue—saying something to another person; from personal narration to detached autobiography. Below are a few progressions we can encourage our pupils to make in their thinking and writing:

Possible Progressions:

—from I to he, informer to information.
—from present to past.
—from I-you relation (in drama) to I-he relation (narrative).
—from an improvisation to writing.
—from personal writing to impersonal writing.
—increasing the time interval between the date of events and date of narration.
—increasing the distance (in all senses) between speaker and listener, then speaker and subject.

Small group discussion — > personal written response.
Observation — > recording — > history, geography—impersonal writing for impersonal audience.
Senses < — > perception < — > affective < — > ideas.
Memory < — > general statement.
Feelings < — > thoughts < — > values.
Needs, desires < — > values.
Single or short statements < — > extended piece of personal writing.
Eye-witness accounts — > memoir.
Group discussion — > recording — > textual comprehension — > information gathering — > inference making — > verbal composition.
Drama — > narrative.

Behind this view lies the implication that pupils can be guided through the different kinds of writing functions towards a more sensitive awareness of language possibilities. While we can hold on to the three categories of the "transactional," "expressive" and "poetic," the suggested hierarchy of functions enables pupils' written response to be that of a developing process. This process enables the pupil to climb the ladder as he matures in internal complexity and external integration which necessarily depends on the downward thrust into details. He is on a two-way road. Sometimes he needs to trace over-generalisations down into adequate sources or build up new ideas.

At the risk of contradicting myself these four categories of talking and writing, listening and reading, do not offer a development like climbing a ladder. Growth is more intricate than that. Perhaps embryology provides the best metaphor. A simple cell becomes a complex organism by differentiating itself into specialised parts at the same time that it maintains integrity by continually inter-relating these parts.

English as She is Writ: An Exercise in Handwriting

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> We believe that the appearance of written work and the way it is set out deserves specific attention. . . . Good handwriting is an important aspect of presentation and is an asset both in school and in later life, but we have tried to suggest that it is also an aid to the flow of thought during the process of writing.
>
> —*The Bullock Report*, 11.55.

> The connection between bad handwriting and poor spelling, though obscure, must have been noticed by every teacher of the less able pupil. . . . Slower learners who achieve better standards of handwriting learn that they are capable of learning new skills.
>
> —Scottish Central Committee on English, *English for Slower Learning Children in the Scottish Secondary School*, p. 46.

Appalling handwriting. (See me.)

Although both of these reports comment on handwriting, the topic is necessarily overwhelmed by the more pressing aspects of their respective themes, and it would perhaps be wrong to exaggerate the problem. Yet the script one uses is as much a feature of communication as the words themselves, and where bad handwriting effectively prevents the reader from understanding what is being said, we are faced with a specific remedial problem. This article is a brief account of a term's effort in tackling the problem with some S1 pupils.

There is no special justification for an English Department to be instrumental in effecting a handwriting programme (and it is from the Art Department we should seek the expertise), but the initiative must come from somewhere and where better than from those whose primary interest is in effective communication? There was certainly an element of self-interest in my thinking on the matter: in what other subjects is the teacher faced with reading over thirty thousand frequently ill-scrawled words each week? Years of exasperation, frustration and strained eyesight, years of hopelessly writing the same pious plea, "You must improve your handwriting," years of concern lest an otherwise able pupil affects his examination marks by alienating the marker's sympathy with a near-illegible script, all culminated in determination to "do something about it."

Of the more noble reasons for seeking an improvement in handwriting, the important ones include:

(a) illegibility as a barrier to effective communication;
(b) the uncertain but presumed correlation of poor handwriting with poor thought and poor spelling;
(c) the attitude of indifference or even hostility which may underly some bad writing;
(d) the aesthetic and social value of elegant presentation of written work; and
(e) the possibility for a few to acquire an interest in handwriting as an artistic matter.

the simple modern hand

Clearly the last factor is more the Art teacher's concern, but as it is a possible development of

the more immediately relevant factors, it is no hindrance.

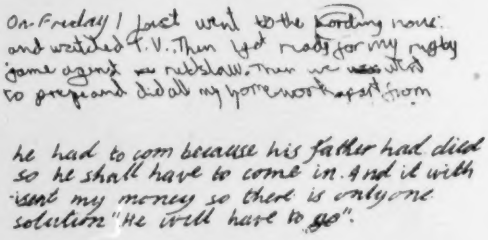
Having resolved to tackle the problem, the first essential is the active participation of the Art Department, and the second is to decide on the method of writing to be adopted. Donald Murray, our calligraphy expert, was unhesitating in choosing Tom Gourdie's *Simple Modern Hand* as the method ideally suited to our purpose:

Today we need a style of handwriting sufficiently streamlined and fundamental to correspond to the down-to-earth character of our time. The answer lies in the Simple Modern Hand which is based on natural handwriting movement and which observes those principles so necessary to a style combining legibility with speed. No simpler hand has so far been devised [1]

To ensure that we received the expert's advice at first hand, we invited Mr Gourdie to visit the school. The visit had unexpected consequences. Tom Gourdie's work on handwriting over the years has earned him international recognition such that we were unsurprised by his technical expertise and knowledge. But his infectious enthusiasm in proselytising what he clearly sees as a "cause" drove several of the English staff to practising on their own handwriting long before the pupils were involved. My own handwriting is now radically altered (for the better, I must add!), which at the least demonstrates that there is no fear that it is too late to improve the secondary pupil's script. It also allows me to exercise a nauseous smugness when insisting on better standards from pupils: all good things have an obverse.

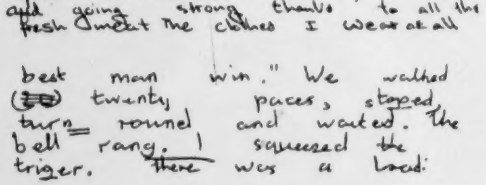
The experiment was initially limited to about sixteen S1 pupils who attended an after-school class with Donald Murray once a week, but during the term, a number of older pupils were introduced to the method through their timetabled art classes. Inevitably enthusiasm and attendance have not been consistent, but we are confident that all but two or three have improved during the term and are suitably impressed by the results, samples of which appear below. The few who have not evidently benefited have failed not because of any defect in method or teaching but because of that wilful obstinacy that is more aptly termed bloody-mindedness.

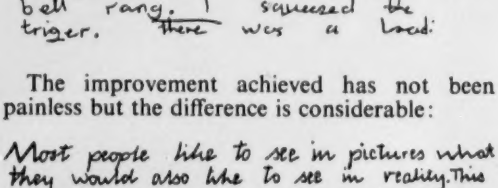
The examples given of the progress of a selection of pupils are firstly to be considered in comparative "before and after" terms, but the best of them—even after such a short period of coaching—can readily stand scrutiny in extrinsic terms as an elegant script.



Although this pupil's writing still needs much practice, it has developed from a shapeless scrawl to a more legible style which can clearly be worked on. More interestingly, the interest in and consequent effort put into practising was the first sign of willingness to apply himself to *any* kind of work.

The next two samples demonstrate original writing styles which were perhaps less ill-formed than the previous pupil's but which were quite unacceptably untidy:



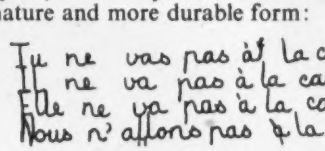


The improvement achieved has not been painless but the difference is considerable:

[1] Tom Gourdie. *The Simple Modern Hand* (Teacher's Book), Collins.

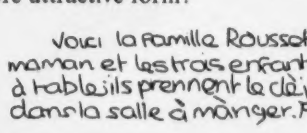
Most people like to see in pictures what they would also like to see in reality. This is quite a natural preference. We all like beauty in nature, and are grateful to

Apart from the revolution in such bad styles, we have also noticed the alteration in some writers from an essentially neat but immature style (which may later deteriorate) to a more mature and more durable form:



Nor would these artists themselves have repulsed us for our taste. But this bias for the pretty and engaging subject is apt to become a stumbling block if it leads

Left-handed writers find considerable difficulties arising from having to push rather than "drag" the pen and from the obscuring of what they write by the hand. The next sample shows how a left-hander has changed what is basically a back-handed print-script into a more cursive and more attractive form:


Voici la famille Roussot-papa,
maman et les trois enfants. Ils sont
à table ils prennent le déjeuner
dans la salle à manger. Minet

Most people like to see in pictures what they would also like to see in reality. This is quite a natural preference. We all like beauty in nature, and are grateful to the artists who

Finally, the sample that really needs no "before"—an example of handwriting that is is elegant by anyone's standards. In fact his previous style was quite undistinguished:

Writing Practice

Most people like to see in pictures what they also like to see in reality. This is quite a natural preference. We all like beauty in nature, and are very grateful to the artists who have preserved it in their works. Nor would these artists themselves have repulsed us for our taste. But this bias for the pretty and engaging subject is apt to become a stumbling block if it leads to a rejection of works which represent a less appealing subject.

From our experiment of one term's effort, I would be reluctant to draw firm conclusions, yet evidence such as has been sampled above is quite compelling. As far as we can see Tom Gourdie's confidence and optimism is largely justified: significant improvement has been effected even in the worst scripts; the commonly-voiced belief that the ballpoint is responsible for bad writing is exposed as fallacious; the fear that the new style would be too slow is partly allayed—one pupil now writes more quickly than before; and from my own experience, when writing at speed even with a biro, my handwriting remains clearly legible whereas it previously deteriorated in direct proportion to the speed (what is more, the school typists make fewer errors when typing from my manuscript).

It is quite certain that there is no question of secondary school being too late to remedy handwriting defects, but one looks to the primary sector as an earlier and better stage at which to establish good writing habits. I do not have the technical knowledge to argue the merits of the Simple Modern Hand over any other method, although Tom Gourdie does with great vigour and conviction.

But I do have the eye to see the attractive elegance of it and the sense to acknowledge its immediate success as a remedial measure. It is both the aesthetic quality of it and its demonstrable practicality that this article is intended to commend.

Going by the Board

PETER KIMBER

Examinations Officer, S.C.E.E.B.

The SCEEB English Panel has been looking critically at each of the SCE papers and the Higher Literature Paper has most recently come under consideration. Two distinct groups of candidates sit Higher English: on the one hand there are the specialists with ambitions to include English as a minor or major element in a university course, and on the other are those who want suitable evidence of literacy for more general purposes. While there is a feeling that Papers I and II satisfy the needs of both groups fairly adqquately, there is less confidence in Paper III, the Literature Paper. The argument goes something like this.

The existing paper's great virtue is the freedom it gives teachers to choose texts that are suitable for their pupils, but this freedom causes two appreciable problems. First, the wide range of texts adds to the difficulty markers inevitably experience in making valid and reliable comparisons. Is a poor answer on *Finnegan's Wake* better than a moderate answer on *Kestrel for a Knave*? Secondly, the Setter is faced with difficulties in framing a question which will enable candidates to answer it whatever text they have read. Vague questions evoke vague answers. This in turn creates the problem that the questions actually set may not be a sufficiently demanding stimulus for the specialist candidate. It may be that the present pattern of question discourages candidates from a close study of the text, and allows them to get by with a rather superficial grasp of the author's technique.

So much for the existing paper, but what are the alternatives? The obvious one is to prescribe texts for study. This certainly avoids the two objections to the present open syllabus: the examination compares like with like, and the questions can require a much closer scrutiny of the text, which in turn provides a more suitable test for the specialist. The disadvantage is the lack of freedom for teachers and pupils. There is also the danger that a set text syllabus would encourage teachers to cram pupils for the examination. This objection can, of course, be levied at the present examination, but it is not an insuperable problem. The right kind of questions can avoid the worst excesses of cramming.

If there are merits in both open and prescribed syllabuses, is some kind of compromise between the two possible? There might be two optional sections, open and prescribed, or some combination within the one paper. The topic has had only a preliminary airing, and the Panel hopes to have discussions with the Central Committee on some suitable occasion.

Standards

In the last edition of *Teaching English* there was a reference to the criticisms of standards of written English made by examiners in many subjects. The Panel has given a good deal of time to considering sample scripts of candidates whose scripts were referred for their poor written English. Two things have emerged from this work. First, all subject panels have been invited to consider what part written English plays in the assessment of their subject. It was evident that in some cases examiners were not concerned with the language in which answers were expressed but only with the subject matter, while in other subjects examiners considered the language to be of great importance and actually awarded marks for communication skills. The second possibility is that selected scripts in a number of subjects should be analysed each year to measure the frequency and variety of errors. Such a research project would be extensive and very time-consuming, but it would perhaps offer some firm facts about variations in standards.

For some time the Panel has had in mind a few minor changes in Higher grade Paper II, and these changes have now been communicated to presenting centres. The three multiple-choice questions on vocabulary have the advantage of being easy to mark, but, ideally, such questions should be pre-tested before use and that is not possible under the circumstances. They will therefore be discontinued. Vocabulary will be tested in other ways. Secondly, Sections 4 and 5 will no longer be options, but will be combined in one compulsory Section. There are sound reasons for this; first, it is extremely difficult to ensure that the two sections are of comparable difficulty, and secondly there seemed no good reason why the skills each section tested should be regarded as optional. Rather, both test skills which are important, so candidates should be encouraged to develop them. Finally, the summary, which has always been done less well than it should have been, will in future test only a part of the whole passage, so fewer marks will be awarded for this section in future. Hopefully this will offer candidates a more suitable extract for precis, resulting in a more discriminating test.

SCCE - SCEEB

A joint meeting of the Scottish Central Committee on English and the English Panel of SCEEB will be held in January 1978 to discuss some of the issues raised by Mr Kimber—and by the Dunning Committee.

Conference Report—'Language Across the Curriculum'

held at Churchhill College, Cambridge, 1st-4th August, 1977.

Mr Davidson was one of five Scots at the Conference. He and two others were sponsored by their Regional Authorities. Two were sponsored by Central Committees, the S.C.C.E. and the S.C.C. on Social Subjects. Principal speakers at the Conference were MICHAEL MARLAND, Headmaster of Woodberry Down in London; ANTHONY ADAMS of Cambridge University Department of Education; COLIN HARRISON, who is working on the Schools Council's "Effective Use of Reading Project;" MIKE TORBE, Warden of Elmbank Teachers' Centre in Coventry; CECILIA GORDON, recently Library Adviser of ILEA and Chairman of the School Library Association; JOHN DARKE, Science Adviser for Dorset.

JOHN DAVIDSON

Assistant Rector,
Woodmill High School, Dunfermline, Fife

Michael Marland gave the introductory talk, based on two fundamental recommendations of the Bullock report, nos. 138 and 139:

138. In the secondary school, all subject teachers need to be aware of:
    (i) the linguistic processes by which their pupils acquire information and understanding, and the implications for the teacher's own use of language;
    (ii) the reading demands of their own subjects, and ways in which the pupils can be helped to meet them.
139. To bring about this understanding every secondary school should develop a policy for language across the curriculum. The responsibility for this policy should be embodied in the organisational structure of the school.

To have a policy implies working together: the challenge comes from the necessity then to consider the whole organisational structure of the school. But teachers are not freelance operators, and this organisation ought to be a means of helping teachers to work together for the benefit of their pupils.

The introductory talk fell into five parts. After discussing the context of the conference, the report and the problem, Marland spoke of our freedom in this country to organise our schools as we think best. This lays on us an obligation for planning the whole curriculum, as any change introduced in one part affects the whole educational experience of pupils. He argued that no curricular innovation should take place without discussion involving all heads of department, and that a corollary of such whole-school planning would be a programme of in-service training, focussed on and conducted in the school. He then mentioned briefly his own attitude to the report and his fear of over-specialisation and excessive departmentalisation in our big modern schools, which cuts across interdepartmental collaboration. He saw a number of ways ahead, however. The first would be in a shared professionalism, with all teachers contributing their own expertise to the solution of the problem and availing themselves of that of their colleagues. Another would be in the whole-school organisation and planning necessary for a language policy. A third would be in the introduction of a school-focussed in-service programme, run in and by the individual school. Yet a fourth would be in the conscious development of liaisons at all evels, between departments, with feeder primaries, etc.

Mr Adams began his talk by pointing out fundamental differences between the Bullock report and the 1921 Newbolt report. Newbolt was concerned primarily with the establishment of the study of English literature as a respectable alternative to the classics, whereas Bullock's central concern is language. Moreover, it is seen to be educationally logical that school work on language should arise and develop from the language of home, building on home experience, whereas Newbolt spoke of the "correction of evil habits." Another novel feature of Bullock is its concern with oral language: Mr Adams considered that teachers ought to talk *with* their classes far more than they often did and, for example, stopped reading aloud to classes at far too early a stage. According to Mr Adams the area where teachers really need to stop and think about their aims is in writing. Far too often, writing is the standard, routine end to every lesson, for no particularly good reason. There is far too much copying from the board, even from books, and even "creative" writing far too often adopts more or less automatically the stimulus-response approach, all this leading to a diminished concern for the quality of work. Real progress, in his opinion, comes only from hard work by both teachers and pupils, from making pupils re-assess any piece of writing and work hard at it to produce a properly finished piece of work, rather than some sort of instant response. Besides, when we write in real life, we always know why and for whom. Too often, pupils have to write—even letters—without this frame of reference. Mr Adams quoted two examples of writing done in school, where pupils had been led to write for other pupils, so that they knew precisely for whom and for what reason they were writing. In one case, a science class was divided and each half did different experiments, which they then wrote up, before giving their notes to another pupil in the other half. In another case, a history class prepared a history trail through its home town for younger pupils. For his final point, Mr Adams considered the language of instructions to pupils, notices, letters to parents, etc., which should all be taken into account and treated as part of the whole-school teaching of language.

Mr Harrison gave the first talk on the second day.

After making the almost axiomatic point that all teachers are responsible for ascertaining pupils' ability to cope with reading demands within their courses, he discussed one or two apparently objective and scientific ways of assessing the "readability" of books used. He made several very interesting points from his research work. It is vital even in remedial sections, not to diminish the reading diet of pupils. Meaning is largely built up from context, and very short passages build up very little context. Any one difficulty is often best resolved by going back a short way to re-read the parts before and after the point in question, thereby reconstructing the context. This means (a) that reading ought to be taught only in passages of a certain length—say 250 words minimum—capable of creating a context, and (b) that specific difficulties ought to be dealt with, not with reference to one difficult word, but with reference to the preceding and succeeding context. This calls in question the whole purpose of comprehension passages as commonly used, besides raising a whole range of questions concerning the teaching of reading in remedial sections.

Mr Torbe's main point was the innovative nature of "Language across the curriculum." As an innovation, it became a political issue in any school: frequently, a school staff might claim to be "doing it already," whereas, before the *whole* staff is involved, the real opportunities for innovation have not been realised to the full. In initiating a policy, it is important to assess the current position in a school, finding out who is doing what, what is the syllabus in this or that department, as well as to publicise one's findings. Thereafter, one ought to proceed from worries or points of uncertainty as perceived by teachers, never by prescription "from above." Such a method makes explicit the learning processes involved and facilitates cooperative solution of difficulties.

The second day was drawn together by Mr Marland's second major contribution, on "Departmental and School Policies." On the organisational context, he underlined firstly the need for whole-school consultation, before returning to his earlier theme of a school-focussed programme of in-service training—the latter being necessary not only to ensure the implementation of a whole-school policy, but also to safeguard priorities in the present financial situation. Secondly, Mr Marland spoke of the need for a two-sided policy, with all teaching covered in a "specific" way by those teachers whose direct responsibility it was, as well as in a "disseminated" way by the whole staff as reinforcement. This led him to his third point, the difficulty of assessing one's effect, of being truly aware of what one does in the classroom. It is not easy to gain insight, but one way might be to tape-record one's lessons and then listen critically afterwards. His fourth point—a major one—was the problems associated with the teaching of the reading of non-narrative English, with style, vocabulary, constructions all different from those commonly used in literary texts and, moreover, since passages are frequently relatively short, offering little help in the way of contextual clues. Mr Marland's fifth and final point centred on the introduction and leadership of a policy for language across the curriculum: while he did not favour the head himself, he would like to see someone in charge fairly high in the school hierarchy, and free of departmental commitment Before going into the question of fruitful ways ahead, Mr Marland discussed questions requiring agreement throughout the staff, such as the style and locus of teaching, and responsibility for it, over broad areas such as vocabulary building, non-narrative writing, reading, punctuation and paragraphs, graphics, and the technical and semi-technical vocabulary required by departments. A fair amount of this will be found to be covered already by the English department, but each school staff must know precisely who teaches what, when, where and why, in order to operate a fully-effective whole-school policy. A questionnaire to heads of department might be a good starting-point, but more directly striking as a way of finding out and informing colleagues might be the exchange and discussion of samples of typical reading set within departments, or lists of homework demanded. Since a crucial part of a whole-school language policy is being aware of what one does oneself, tape-recordings of oneself before a class would be listened to critically afterwards by a colleague—or even submitted for discussion at a departmental meeting! The non-fiction shelves of the library should be under constant scrutiny. Do they contain the books recommended in standard text-books for further reading? Have these been examined for "readability?" In view of the gulf between narrative and non-narrative English ought the English department to prescribe more non-narrative reading, perhaps even require more writing in this style? In certain important ways it is much more difficult than straightforward narrative. Mr Marland recommended the setting-up of a working party to monitor progress.

On the third full day of the conference, we had talks from two speakers, who are in a way a little aside from language and school-teaching, though in another, vitally concerned with both—Mrs Gordon and Mr Darke. Mrs Gordon spoke of resource-based learning within the library and within departments, stressing the need for a good central record of all resources within the school, whether these are located centrally or in satellite resource centres around the school. She spoke of the need to train pupils in library skills at all ages, suggesting a progressively more demanding programme from infant up to pre-university stage. Mr Darke spoke of the contrast between the way in which science had often been treated in the past and the best teaching of today. Science had been seen as dealing in hard fact: a seemingly inherent logical structure led to a linear programme, this in turn lending the subject a certain impersonality (whence *e.g.* the passive verbs in text-books). He pointed to the different approach of "real" science, with its tentative nature leading pupils to put their *own* questions, to use their imagination in formulating and testing hypotheses. Science seen in this way becomes a much more real experience for pupils, in which communication is all-important: pupils develop and refine their own ideas, require to talk about them—it is an excellent situation for learning through talk. What matter if they learn their scientific vocabulary more slowly and commit less to paper, if they have learnt more about "real" science and incidentally had a far more valid educational experience besides?

Besides the lectures, we had a total of nine hours in working parties, as well as a question-and-answer session with the day's main speakers each evening. One felt sometimes that the informal chat with colleagues was as illuminating as the lectures themselves, and we certainly all enjoyed it. The working parties, with their loosely structured remit, were found particularly helpful. What criticism I heard, and of course there was a little, seemed to come from some of the English specialists (teachers of English, drama and associated subjects

made up two-thirds of those present). I felt, however, that the critics had been looking for something much more specialist than they were entitled to expect. If we think of the title in its two separate halves—"language" and "across the curriculum"—then the course quite rightly avoided technicalities on the teaching of reading, etc., which would represent the "language" part, the English specialist's field, to concentrate rather on the need for a whole-school approach to the problems. As a modern linguist myself, I had gone to Cambridge in some doubt, for fear of being quite out of my depth. I was pleased therefore to find myself attending a course which was not too specialised for me and which I found of real help. It was nice to know that in England, where they ought to have two and a half years of a start on us, they still find Bullock a difficult, challenging document. It was comforting to hear that teachers all over England find that it raises so many issues that it is hard to know which to pursue at any given time. In the end, I came home with a long list of ideas, tips, suggestions culled from lectures, working parties, and from the informal chat, having enjoyed the conference very much and more or less lost my fear of Bullock!

Notes and News

Our regular feature "Notes and News" is restricted in this issue to a review of one of the Scottish Youth Theatre's productions. Other items are held over until the next issue due to pressure of space. We apologise to contributors who have submitted items for publication. We particularly regret that we are not able to carry a report of the mini summer institute, the National Course in English, held in St Andrews in early July.

SCOTTISH YOUTH THEATRE

SYT's first production *Oh What a Lovely Peace* was presented in August in Moray House Theatre and proved to be controversial, at least in the correspondence columns of *The Scotsman*. It was, charged Allen Wright, the paper's drama critic, propaganda "in which these young people should not become embroiled."

Well, it was and it wasn't. The play is about the nuclear arms race, about the fact that mankind now can destroy itself and much of the rest of life on this planet. It says simply, but powerfully, that this state of affairs is horrific and demands of the audience that it consider whether this is inevitable. It makes no attempt to be "balanced" and put the other point of view (that the existence of the nuclear threat has prevented the escalation to a world scale of conflicts ranging from Korea and the Cold War to Vietnam and the Middle East) and, indeed, it knocks, in a sense unfairly, politicians like Hugh Gaitskell and even Clement Attlee, a harmless old ghost one would have thought.

So it is one sided. And undoubtedly there exist profoundly important questions to be asked (how is it that good and honourable men with good and honourable motives can have led us to this predicament?) that this play never faces. There is need, no doubt, not only for a full historical account, but also for a major literary work on the theme. Is there a Shakespeare, a Scott, or a Tolstoy in the house?

All this, however, doesn't really matter. For this play is what it is—a richly comic, deeply serious, satirical review. And—here is the point—it never pretends to be anything other than it is. It is, in fact, artistically honest, impressively so. What is obnoxious about propaganda is its dishonesty, and this play is as honest as Swift, Pope or Burns when they set themselves to do similar jobs.

It would be objectionable too if one felt that the young players were being manipulated. But clearly there is no danger of this—they are eminently intelligent and responsive, and they live after all in a world full of social and political messages very different from the ones in the play. Indeed, whatever the play does or doesn't do, it certainly operates against political and social apathy. Some of its most telling moments show apathy at work—in the late 40s when the radio is announcing the build up of nuclear arms, the people shrug their shoulders and continue to foxtrot and tango to the music of Joe Loss and Victor Sylvester; and now while President Carter authorises the production of the neutron bomb, Tartan fitbaw fans down their McEwans and roar out the nauseous "Flower of Scotland." There can't be much wrong with that sort of thing.

This play, indeed, is precisely the sort of thing that these young people should be doing. It is about a matter of overwhelming contemporary importance, it is deeply serious, it is about Scotland but not parochially so, and it provides, very richly, "opportunities to pursue theatrical excellence." Admittedly it is "excellence" of a limited kind; doubtless the company must soon tackle a classic play—the kind that continues to give off meanings long after its inception. But within its limits it could hardly have been better done.

The writer, Hector McMillan, has brought together contributions by 21 contributors, some of them quite brilliant (Tom Lehrer's songs still sparkle venomously after 20(?) years). He has done a magnificent scripting job. But this production is a director's triumph. Denise Coffey's inventiveness leaves you wordless with admiration. Her stage is always crowded, always full of movement but there is never any loss of control or indulgence in theatrical tricks for the sake of theatrical tricks.

The young players have responded to this quality of professional leadership outstandingly. At least five of them turn in performances that with a little more experience behind them would have been flawless. Several others do smaller things (the Yankee Doodle girls!) to near perfection.

But the really impressive thing is the ensemble playing. The crowd scenes (and the play is one crowd scene after another) are magnificent. This was theatrical excellence, riotous, free, yet rigorously disciplined, the outcome of very hard work and very tough direction. The "curtain" demonstrates this. The players rise silently after the last nuclear holocaust and take their applause standing absolutely still and absolutely unsmiling. None of that self indulgence that disfigures so much of the theatre both professional and amateur.

These young people have been enabled to do a splendid, craftsmanlike job. The SYT is off to a fine start. It deserves the support of the teaching profession and in particular, that of English teachers. Let it not languish.

FACING THE FACTS ABOUT READING?

BOB PARIS, *Assistant Headmaster at Garthamlock Secondary School, Glasgow, interprets and queries the findings of James Maxwell's recent research and of two other NFER publications:*

Reading Progress from 8 to 15
James Maxwell. NFER Publishing Company, 148 pages, £5·40.
The Child's Acquisition of Language
June Derrick. NFER Publishing Company, 53 pages, £1·75.
Language Needs of Minority Group Children
June Derrick. NFER Publishing Company, 59 pages, £2·10.

All three of these books are published by NFER, all of them are short, and, in their different ways, all of them make useful contributions to the intensifying debate about language in education. The Maxwell Report, based on recent research and focussed on the Scottish situation, must claim most space in this review, but June Derrick's little books also deserve attention.

The Child's Acquisition of Language provides a summary of much recent thinking and research. It may be of most value to teachers concerned with infants or pre-school children but it could be a helpful and lucid guide to secondary teachers who wished a quick overview of the field. The main development of the child's language in the pre-school years is discussed, and there is a clear analysis of the issues which underlie language policies, and "interventionist" programmes. A short reading list is provided for readers who might wish to go further.

Language Needs of Minority Group Children traces the changing treatment of immigrants over the last twenty years or so and indicates the need to think nowadays in terms of "minority group education" instead of "education for the children of immigrants." June Derrick strongly argues the need for this re-orientation, describes methods of teaching English to non-native speakers, and moves in her last chapter to more controversial ground with the suggestion that much teaching, in the early stages at least, should be done in the child's native language. This argument for bi-lingualism might seem wildly unrealistic in certain British situations, considering the diversity of languages and the existing pressure on resources, but one can certainly understand how tensions may develop from "integrationist" policies. The book does concentrate one's mind on some problems that are already familiar, at least to teachers of English—how far, for example, can the school accommodate cultural diversity without threat to its own stability? In Scotland's relatively sympathetic and tolerant atmosphere we should perhaps be thinking harder about the children of overseas origin who already fill many places in our schools. June Derrick's book could be a starting-point for such serious thinking; otherwise, we might find suddenly that we have left extremists with an open field.

Effective provision for minority groups will probably depend on the broadly conceived policies of educational authorities and, within schools, a concerted effort across departmental boundaries. It seems perfectly possible that standards of reading will respond only to the same kind of strategic planning and development, as James Maxwell's *Reading Progress from 8 to 15* seems at many points to suggest. Mr Maxwell has already raised some pointed questions in the pages of *Teaching English*[1] about the kind of control exercised by the secondary school over the development of reading skills. His book has much relevance to current discussions of primary-secondary liaison, departmental structures in the secondary school and, of course, "language across the curriculum." It therefore merits fairly detailed summary and comment.

Over the period 1972/76 Maxwell and his research team examined the reading development of pupils from P4 to S3. Fifty-eight primary schools and fifteen secondary schools were involved. Pupils were tested on the Edinburgh Reading Tests at the beginning of the survey and their progress was followed up. Since it was clearly impossible to sample and then follow up the entire age-range during the period available, two "end-on" samples were used. One group at the P4 stage in 1972/73 was tested simultaneously with another group at P7. By following both groups over the period of the inquiry, it was possible by 1976 to have a general view of the age-range. The opportunity was taken to gather a substantial amount of information about the pupils—information, for example, about their recreational reading, the experience and training of their teachers and the socio-economic factors related to success or failure.

The primary school findings suggest that "differences in reading attainment are very much greater within classes than between classes." Little evidence is offered, or could be offered, on the question of changing standards, since there was no obvious baseline for comparison, but at least no decline was shown over the brief period of the survey. For the purpose of analysis, the researchers distinguished between literary, functional and recreational reading, with the term "literary" covering primary school class readers. Much of the evidence about this stage seems very inconclusive. No relationship was shown between class size and reading attainment. Group or individual methods seemed to produce results similar to those in classes where there was more class teaching. Again, on this evidence, it does not seem to matter whether a teacher is committed to integrated work in language, or to the teaching of reading and writing as discrete skills. Ability grouping is not necessarily linked to better reading, and one cannot be sure from the findings about the value of oral reading, formal silent reading and reading homework as devices to improve performance. Some general points do emerge with clarity. For one thing, "educational progress is determined much more by the nature of the intake, in terms of ability and home background, than by differences in educational

treatment." Teachers, furthermore, tend to be half-sceptical about the effectiveness of their own operations —when asked to account for good or poor reading, they habitually lay greater stress on home background or natural ability than on the effects of earlier schooling. In general, the fact that reading attainment seems unrelated to different methods and approaches underlines the truth of a statement from Bullock that "There is no one method, medium, device or philosophy that holds the key to the process of learning to read."

An account is given of the use of class readers in the upper stages of primary education. Most classes now use a fair range of these with reasonable allowance for the range of reading ability. The widespread use of SRA and Ward Lock Reading Laboratories is noted. Their use is not evaluated, however, since that might justify a separate inquiry. It is pointed out that in S1, the widespread use of short novels may represent quite a new experience for many pupils. Most of them have known only the primary school class reader, despite the growing use of paperbacks by primary teachers. The report lists the most widely used class readers and notes their "readability" as assessed by the SMOG formula, a simple device which permits the rough-and-ready assessment of a text's difficulty for a given age or stage.

The SMOG index is also used to assess some widely-used primary mathematics textbooks. It is suggested that primary schools must develop effective "functional reading" both for project work and as a preparation for the widened curriculum of the secondary school. The SMOG analysis suggests that poorer readers may have a "double difficulty" with primary mathematics. Furthermore, although 90% of the primary pupils in the sample did project work, there was little evidence that they were given much help with the functional reading required. It could be that in this area the performance of primary teachers falls short of their intentions. Most of them claim to give priority to the teaching of rapid reading for relevant information and to detailed reading to follow instructions. A sample of secondary teachers interviewed professed themselves fairly satisfied with the ability of S1 pupils to read rapidly for relevant information, but less happy about detailed reading to follow instructions. Though the different subject areas in secondary obviously make different demands on the reading abilities of incoming pupils, only 44% of secondary teachers interviewed expressed general satisfaction with the attainments that they found.

A substantial part of the report is about recreational reading. On the whole, the evidence seems depressing for secondary teachers. Out-of-school reading of books at the early secondary stage falls away to a level comparable with P4. The reading of ephemera—newspapers, comics and magazines—falls away to a lesser extent, but the quality of this material shows little development over the age-range. It seems that as pupils grow older, the school exerts less direct influence over the reading which they do in their own time. "The relation between school studies of any kind and out of school reading decreases almost threefold between P4 and S2, with only a small difference between boys and girls." By the end of S2, a fairly large number of poorer readers seem to be giving up all forms of reading. Between P4 and S2, there is also a decline in the use of school and public libraries.

Some interesting facts emerged about teachers in the primary school. The length of experience of the teacher, for example, did not seem to affect the way she organised her classroom—older teachers, in other words, may be more adaptable or innovative than we often suppose. No clear relationship was established between teacher experience and pupil progress (though the report makes it clear that teacher turnover made this a difficult point to investigate). In-service arrangements are shown to be quite inadequate, while pre-service courses are said to neglect vital aspects of the teaching of reading. Teachers in the upper primary, for example, need training to encourage skills necessary for secondary education, secondary teachers, at the same time, need training in the development of reading skills appropriate to their subjects.

The researchers found it difficult to assess the practices of the secondary school, because the different organisation of secondaries makes it harder to use the class as the unit of study. No significant differences, however, were found between streamed and mixed ability classes. Predictably enough, perhaps, research revealed more class teaching, less formal silent reading and less pupil to teacher oral reading. More surprisingly, it seems that less reading is required of pupils in S2 than in S1. There is the possibility that from S3 onwards, with the onset of a clear non-certificate/certificate division, less able pupils may fail to keep up what skills they have developed. Apparently there is little or no teaching of "functional reading" to meet the needs of different subjects. James Maxwell has already taken up the implications of this in the *Teaching English* article referred to above, and has suggested three possible strategies—an extension of the work of the English teacher, the training or re-training of other subject specialists, or the appointment of specialist teachers of reading and study techniques.

Three chapters are devoted to the socio-economic factors involved in reading progress. These chapters present a detailed and intricate argument which is difficult to condense, but it becomes clear how many crucially important factors may lie beyond the control of the schools. Much educational literature of recent years has pointed in the same direction; yet the position is too complex to allow easy generalisations. An examination of the performance of readers judged good and poor in relation to their school classes at P4 revealed, as expected, a greater proportion of good readers from non-manual social classes. It might be said, with caution, that while the progress of poor readers through to S3 is not related to social class, good readers from Social Classes I and II (Registrar General's classification) do maintain their progress more than good readers from Social Classes IV and V. The pattern of development seems largely the same for boys and girls. Attempts to establish the contribution of intelligence (VRQ) to reading proved inconclusive, because tests of intelligence have a large verbal component.

Graham Atherton contributes a study of high and low achievers in this age-range, attempting to establish relationships between, for example, the status of school neighbourhoods and the incidence of good and poor readers. At the primary school stage, "socioeconomic background and out of school reading figured as the most important correlates of reading attainment and subsequent progress of the good and poor readers, carrying much more weight than selected practices and attitudes of class teachers." Good readers of manual background read as much as those from non-manual backgrounds—poor readers, whatever their social background, read little or nothing out of school. At the secondary stage,

the relationship between book reading and progress seems to be less clear, but good readers still read more widely in newspapers and magazines. Environment seems to have more influence on good readers; reading scores seem more likely to deteriorate in the early secondary school where schools are of low status or the father is of manual occupation. Overall, however, the depressing evidence is that over half of the good readers and three quarters of the poor readers fail to progress after they leave primary school.

The report is fairly critical of arrangements for remedial education. The primary and secondary schools surveyed seemed to follow quite illogical practices, which were apparently dictated by staffing levels rather than by any considered philosophy. The tendency was to identify the pupils whose reading was poorest, for whatever reason, then to give them remedial teaching without any proper diagnosis. Individuals were assessed against an assumed norm, not against the criterion of their potential. Arrangements for "re-entry" to normal class-work were haphazard, and at secondary level the selection of pupils often seemed to depend on the need to fill a given number of places. Worst of all, the comparison of groups of pupils of a given attainment at P5, some of whom received remedial attention and some who did not, suggested that "much of the work of the remedial teacher of reading could be done, and is being done, equally well by the class teacher. A follow-up of 24 P7 pupils showed that those pupils who were receiving remedial teaching in P7 made some progress between P7 and S3, but relatively less than their contemporaries. This applied whether the pupils were in remedial classes in secondary school or not." It is also suggested that the diagnosis of weakness is even less effective in the secondary school than in the primaries.

The foregoing summary inevitably glosses over many important points of a fairly detailed report, which ends with a number of recommendations. These include a suggestion that teachers would be better to devote less time to discussion of "methods" and that they should concentrate instead on some neglected aspects of reading —especially functional reading. Remedial arrangements need thorough review, the able pupil should have more attention, and teachers should be trained to understand the curriculum's demands on reading skills. We should also take more "judicious interest" in pupils' leisure reading.

Few of us might quarrel with such recommendations, but in a general assessment of the report, it seems fair to ask two questions. How far, in the first place, does the study satisfy the criteria to which educational research reports must conform, in terms of design, data collection and so on? Secondly, and more simply, should English teachers take the trouble to read it?

The basic sampling design seems perfectly appropriate in this case; a great deal has been learned over the years about the sampling techniques most suited to reading surveys. On the other hand, many readers may feel uncertain about the findings presented for certain sub-groups. Although a thoroughgoing assessment of the statistical techniques employed would take the present reviewer well beyond his competence, the conclusions about remedial education might seem based on rather insecure foundations, given the small number of pupils in the groups which were compared and given the difficulty of controlling the many factors which can affect performance. To say this is in a sense to express a reservation about survey techniques, for one cannot, as in the experimental situation, say with confidence that treatment A achieves results superior to treatment B. It is simply not possible in a large scale survey to match groups closely on the relevant variables. This criticism is cautiously urged, for the report itself is always cautious. Again, however, that will be regarded in some quarters as a limitation. Many teachers might have preferred a survey with a narrower range and closer focus, one which was able to express its findings with greater conviction on a limited range of topics.

Surveys of any kind are open to certain standard objections. There is always the problem of locating causes, even when correlations are firmly established. Important variables can easily be overlooked altogether—if, for example, no differences are observed in the reading progress of pupils who have more experienced teachers, might it be anything to do with the way in which more difficult classes are allocated? One wonders whether in this instance there may have been a concentration on sociological factors in reading development to the neglect of psychological variables. The age-range 9-15 quite clearly takes pupils into early adolescence and one would guess that the pattern of reading must be affected by the process of maturation. If so, are we entitled to be a little less depressed by the secondary school's apparently baneful influence on the extent of recreational reading?

Again, if there are certain in-built problems about a survey approach, it may be that there are more specific objections to be made against surveys of reading. Margaret Clark[2] has criticisms to make of surveys which try to set present-day standards against those of the past, and while the Maxwell Report is not that kind of survey, her remarks are worth quoting:

> Not only is this type of investigation too general for the crucial factors, even in the school situation, to be identified with sufficient precision, but also the type of measuring instrument devised for the survey approach is too crude to focus on the various facets of reading ability in the adult fluent reader.

The Maxwell report could be largely exonerated from the second point of criticism here, for the Edinburgh Reading Tests are reliable (in the sense of producing consistent results) and they have substantially more "face validity" than many tests used in the past for reading surveys. Margaret Clark's other point, however, refers to the "generality" of survey methods, prompting one to ask whether the scale of an enquiry like this may not enforce a certain crudity in the analytical categories which are employed. Surveys may achieve breadth at the expense of depth; research focuses, inevitably, on broad patterns of clearly observable behaviour, and the analysis is in terms of a limited number of essentially simple variables. Perhaps educational research can do no other, but it is here that English teachers may find their sticking-point, and one might now turn to consider the report from that other point of view.

Essentially, the objection of English teachers is liable to be that certain crucial elements in the teaching of reading are inaccessible to the level of analysis pursued here. Secondary teachers, in particular, who do indeed spend much time discussing "methods," may be unhappy to find in the report that methods are effectively sub-sumed under a limited number of organisational practices —group teaching as against individual—or class teaching, with reference made to oral reading, formal silent reading and the issue of reading homework. It is not merely that unit studies fail to get a mention; the point is that

many of the dynamic inter-personal factors, the dialogue and exchange which English teachers value highly, do not come into the picture at all. Perhaps it is because we are unused to thinking of reading skills in abstraction from the materials on which they are exercised that the report seems to offer a kind of ghostly paradigm of things, rather than a sense of how lessons go on. This complaint, that certain vital matters are too elusive to be caught in a coarse analytical net, may be an injustice to a document which offers much, and cannot be expected to offer everything; though one notes the statement that possibly "in depth studies involving classroom observation are now required."

It would be wrong to pretend that the report makes easy reading; one has to pick one's way with care through a mass of inter-correlated data to salvage a few firm conclusions. All the same, it is worth the effort, and there could be no greater irony than the neglect of a major report on reading because teachers judged it difficult to read. Michael Marland has lately urged a new spirit of co-operation among all those interest groups—remedial teachers, primary teachers, secondary English teachers, educational researchers—who have a common concern with reading, but who tend to frighten each other off. English teachers should not be frightened off. The Maxwell Report provides much material for the discussion we should all be conducting with our colleagues and, like June Derrick's books, it turns our attention outwards from the classroom to a host of wider issues.

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1. Maxwell, James. "Teaching Reading—Whose Business?" *Teaching English*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Autumn 1976.
2. Clark, Margaret. "Language and Reading: Research Trends," in A. Davies (Ed.) *Problems of Language and Learning*. Heinemann 1975.

"Basic" English

Teaching Children English
Cedric Cullingford. Ward Lock Educational, 120 pages, £2·25.

It used to be possible for aspiring divines to buy books of sermon outlines, padding out other men's skeletons with their own verbiage. Cedric Cullingford's book (rather grandly subtitled "A Language Policy for Primary and Middle Schools") reminds me slightly of those in that the bulk of it is occupied with brief suggestions of one or two lines each for classroom activities and exercises, padded out by exegetical comment. But there the resemblance ends. This is not a book of instant lessons for lazy teachers. Rather it works on the sound assumptions that "theories should emerge from the actual experience of teaching" and that "teachers welcome, but seldom receive, concrete suggestions." The book attempts with some success to provide both those things—detailed practical ideas in a strong conceptual framework.

Each of the six main sections ("Communications," "Grammar," "Reading," "Creative Work," "Activities for Home and School" and "English and Other Subjects") opens with a lucid and intelligent introduction, although this of course is no guarantee of infallibility. I find myself in broad general sympathy with, *e.g.*, his views on comics (". . . they stand for instant pleasure without demands . . . they teach a child to read without attention and respond without feeling"), or on the framework for creative work (". . . it must be stringent and demanding: imagination must be linked with criticism for both to be really satisfying") or indeed on the place of English itself —"not so much a subject as an approach to the fundamentals of learning." However my hackles begin to rise slightly when I find that—in common with many Primary experts and advisers—he thinks that the reading of books, and indeed books themselves, are both merely instrumental. "All the reading children do should be for the sake of discussion of some kind. . . ."

However the real meat of the book is the wealth of practical suggestions for classroom work—nearly five hundred in all! Obviously there are some duds, but the vast majority reflect an accurate reading of the potential of both pupils and teachers at the stages the book is devised for. I would be quite happy with most of them at any level from P5/6 to the end of Common Course S2, and there is a lot of material (particularly under "Communications") which a "good certificate class" could benefit from.

Under the sub section "T.V." for example, suggestions range from "Ask children to make lists of baddies and goodies and say what they look like" to "Ask children to create a parody of a typical T.V. interview . . . a formula for a T.V. show . . . etc."

Word games and the like—"which are a useful adjunct to the more systematic study of language"—are here in plenty, as are sound adages like "Take the opportunity to tell stories to children," "Create definite opportunities to listen to children telling stories they have prepared." There are humane tips also on more basic classroom techniques: "In marking concentrate on one fault only" (rather than marking with the red blitz) and "make as much use as possible of children helping each other and assessing each other's work."

The range of ability and potential is both recognised and catered for, with valid and interesting activities for the very slowest as well as more stringent work which "makes the intellectual demands on children that they both need and crave."

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Crossroads
M. Madgwick and N. McCulla. Edward Arnold, 159 pages, £2·25.

Target English
R. Acland. Basil Blackwell, 6 packs of 5 booklets (£1·95), approval pack with Teacher's Notes (£3·00).

"How do you feel now—excited, indifferent, inquisitive, or bored?" A brave question to include in a workbook which claims to be "a course in the language arts . . . for 11 to 14 year olds." "Confused" is the response that springs to mind when faced with *Crossroads*. This work book surely exemplifies the condition of many English teachers who have—at last—been persuaded that the traditional "first aid in English" has little value; but who have yet to get to grips with the open-ended "Language in Use" approach.

The book consists of 30 units (Kids to Careers) of varying length and depth. Most units contain several sub-sections which I would split into two types: first,

the more traditional question-extract-interpretation-writing sections: second, sections entitled "Library," "Books," "Things to do," "Places to go." Of the latter, the "Library" and "Books" sections are disappointingly uneven. "Things to do" suggests "organise a district cleanathon" (?!): "keep some animals such as fish . . . in your classroom. . . . What similarities can you see between them and humans?" Not to be outdone, "Places to go" offers "Visit the Motor Show:" "Why, visit a haunted house, of course." These sections when not being downright silly, are geared more directly to the techniques of a primary integrated classroom, and fit less easily into the traditional subject curriculum of most secondary schools. Unfortunately, the material contained in the main sections is pitched at least at the level of first year secondary. These sections contain a great deal of formal grammar work (no matter how disguised). "Our School" by Gareth Owen is followed by, "Your teacher might consider that if you wrote as this poet does you would need to be 'corrected' to get rid of the rather 'slangy' style." (Ye gods—in 1977!). Writing assignments are often rather stereotyped ("The most exciting day of my life") and always bluntly stated.

On the credit side, there is some excellent new material, such as "Storm" by Nan Chauncy, and there are some useful accessories for inexperienced teachers, such as shape poems, a stage plan, the structure of debates, constructing radio programmes, and writing a class novel.

But the confusion remains. I feel that this book attempts to be all things to all teachers right across the traditionalist/progressive spectrum. *All* teachers will gain much of value from it; but, equally, all will remain uneasy. At £2·25 it could be an expensive risk.

Target English by Robin Acland gets much nearer the mark. This is a series of six topic-based booklets (*Snake*, *The West*, *Underground*, *Flames*, *Baby*, *Birds of Prey*) aimed at S3/4 CSE or O-Grade. There is a Teacher's Book which is a useful extra if only for the frankness, even arrogance, of the introduction.

I must confess to being biased against the pamphlet-type approach. Perhaps it's mainly economic—the pamphlets are not too durable, and they cost 39p each. Further, first impression was that too much material had been crammed on to each page, so much so that the eye constantly leapt from one place to another, and mainly to the photographs. But this is quickly overcome. Each section of the booklet is, in fact, clearly numbered and marked off from the others to facilitate reading and response.

Each booklet contains a great variety of material in the form of photographs (they're very good), poetry, fiction, interviews, surveys and so on, and each double page of the booklet deals with a different aspect of the chosen topic. Questions for written and oral work are unobtrusively situated at the bottom of the page, while the final double page offers a wide variety of Activities.

There is much to like in this series. One has to agree with the author about the variety and quality of the extracts. Particularly welcome is the blend of fictional and non-fictional material. The Activities are realistic, varied and inventive, and are placed in such a way that the teacher can adapt them in many ways. Tony Adams has spoken of the dreariness of English lessons where the teacher reads an extract and then instantly hands out a worksheet. Robin Acland avoids this. I particularly like the way in which much of the written work depends on the use of factual knowledge gained from the text. The Teacher's Book is excellent, less for its page notes, than for the suggestions for drama work and the detailed list of additional materials including slides, films, records and pamphlets.

Inevitably, some topics are better than others. I found *Snake* and *Underground* less satisfactory because they contained less good fictional material. And why use the same cave painting in *The West* and *Underground*?

The style of this series steals a march on the single course book not only because it offers so much more variety, but also because the novelty will appeal particularly to S3 and S4 slower learners for whom the series is, in my opinion, most suitable. The format also lends itself very usefully to both group and individual work.

Four more topics are in preparation. I look forward to their arrival.

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The Skills of Handwriting
Reginald C. Phillips. Wheaton, 86 pages, £1·25.

The writer of this book early declares his concern to be "with handwriting primarily as a means of communication;" he is not advocating any particular style but accepts any style "provided that it can be written with ease and grace, and can preserve legibility and a pleasing appearance at any writing speed."

This is a dissatisfying book in many ways: it is concerned with a matter of the greatest consequence; it describes the elements of handwriting and pinpoints many faults; it offers examples of handwriting before and after remedial attention; and yet it fails either to inspire or to present a coherent account of the author's method. It is particularly obvious that this book is not of great assistance when compared with the work of Mr Tom Gourdie of Kirkcaldy, whose handwriting method has gained considerable international recognition.

The Skills of Handwriting begins with an interesting account of the development of handwriting and teaching methods, followed by an analysis of the mechanics of handwriting, such as pen hold, angles of writing, letter construction and the effects of different kinds of nib. The effect is a little weakened by a lack of logical development. The ensuing chapter, entitled "Diagnosis and Corrective Treatment," suggests itself to be most pertinent to the teacher's concern for remedial action, but it is a mere five pages long. Although there are some useful practical points, it is not easy to establish what coherent approach to bad handwriting can be devised from what Mr Phillips says. One is left with the disconcerting impression that a major opportunity has been missed.

A similar dissatisfaction is felt over the examples given of improvements effected in various scripts. Mr Phillips does not offer a basic method of handwriting—which is, in the end, the weakest feature of the book—but rather works to improve the legibility of whatever style the writer tends to use. He unquestionably achieves improvements, but the improved scripts seem to remain very poor: there is little evidence of any of the writers showing the potential to develop a truly elegant hand. The effectiveness of the impact is reduced, particularly in the context of the stylishness that can be acquired through Mr Gourdie's method by even the poorest of writers.* Mr Phillips's examples fail to uplift the reader to a proper sense of admiration for what can be achieved.

The remaining half of the book is devoted to appendices

* Gourdie, T. *Simple Modern Hand* (Teacher's Book). Collins, 1975, 50p.

ranging from the practicality of "Teaching Aids" to the esoteric quirks of "Flourishing for Fun." Although much is of passing interest, the structure is defective, the total effect of which is uncertainty over the main purpose of the book, and difficulty in discriminating the relative value of items. Mr Phillips's book is certainly interesting, but I would not recommend it.

COLIN C. LAMONT,
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Assignments in Punctuation and Spelling
Eric Williams. Edward Arnold, 170 pages, £1·95.
A Survival Kit for Writing English
R. F. Bailey. Longman, 84 pages, £1·65.
Exercise Your English
W. Hayden Richards. Evans, 72 pages, £0·50.

The first two books under review are unashamedly presented as rule books in the basic skills of writing English. Both are intended to help senior school pupils and students in post-school education whose performance may be marred by weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure; both are designed for individual use; both stress the need for correctness (for examination purposes and "to impress your tutor"); and both display the faults of prescriptive language teaching. Rules are presented to be learnt, usages are discussed at length and exercises are in the main unrelated to what pupils actually want to say.

To lump these two books together, however, is to be unjust—certainly to one of them. Eric Williams in *Assignments in Punctuation and Spelling* states firmly that the use of his books should be linked to the pupils' own writing and he suggests ways in which this can be done. Four of the six chapters deal with spelling and there is a 34-page checklist of commonly mis-spelt words with cross-references to the assignments which deal with the spelling of each word in the list. The approach to spelling concentrates on the commonest spelling rules and patterns. Individual chapters focus on the relationship between spelling and word function; between spelling and sound; on the effects of adding prefixes and suffixes and, briefly, on etymology. Rules, explanations, exceptions and exercises follow hard upon one another but the explanations are simple and systematic, and the exercises, which rely mainly on the completion of "gapped" words and the completion of lists of words showing the same spelling pattern, are designed to develop and reinforce the concepts expressed in the rules.

The assignments on the punctuation skills are on the whole less satisfactory than those on spelling. Punctuation is so closely linked to intonation, to understanding of sentence structure, and to what one wants to say, that the standard type of punctuation exercise provided here ("Add full stops and commas to the following passage"—from Dickens, W. W. Jacobs or Jerome K. Jerome) seems worthless as a means of improving a pupil's own performance in written work. Some of William's assignments on punctuation do, however, while demanding the precise use of a particular feature of punctuation, involve an imaginative effort of composition, and it is in these exercises that the value to the teacher of these two chapters will lie.

To work through this book from beginning to end would be an effort of crushing tedium and almost wholly futile. If it is to be used in the class, it must be in close association with the written work which the individual pupil is producing and it is here that the very detailed table of contents and the spelling checklist will be useful in directing teacher and pupil to explanations and exercises related to the errors which the pupil is actually committing. In addition, the book provides a handy tabulation of the commonest spelling rules.

A Survival Kit for Writing English is another do-it-yourself book aimed at improving the basic skills of senior school and undergraduate students and "anyone else who writes." As the title suggests, this is a more personal book than *Assignments in Punctuation and Spelling*. It presents one man's simplification of the structure of English sentences—into Control Units (principal clauses) and Support Units (most subordinate clauses and phrases)—and the associated punctuation. Mr Bailey's simplification will seem a distortion to anyone with a glimmering of more complex ways of describing sentence structures, but Mr Bailey is concerned with teaching about language simply as an aid to improving composition skills, and the book contains many hints, mnemonics and rules of thumb for the struggling student. The trouble is, of course, that language is not simple and it cannot be reduced to rules of thumb. Mr Bailey is aware of this problem and provides much in the way of explanation, qualification and compromise in a determinedly non-technical, jokey, man-to-man style, which is often irksome in the writer's rather desperate desire to appeal to the age-group at which the book is aimed. The following quotations give some idea of the prevailing tone of the book:

"Doubling the subject group is like harnessing two furnaces together: do it properly and your sentence will breathe fire;"

"the reader is thrown off balance by two alien support units skirmishing in a grammatical no-man's land."

One must have serious doubts about the value of reading pages of this sort of stuff—and about its effects on the composition skills of the reader. Indeed, it is very doubtful whether reading about language, even at this stage of a writer's career, can improve performance in written work, and what the publication of these two books highlights is the need, not for more books of this nature, but for additional time in schools for teachers to provide individual help for pupils at all stages with specific weaknesses in the basic language skills.

A Survival Kit contains, by way of padding a haphazard list of commonly confused spellings and usages, a chapter on guidelines on how to present an essay, which begins with the injunction: "Please type your essay," and a self-test.

Exercise Your English is a throw-back to 1946 (its first year of publication)—or 1906, perhaps—to the happy days at any rate when English was a matter of converting singulars to plurals (watch out for "son-in-law"), supplying appropriate gender nouns, animal sounds, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, "well worn phrases," correcting common errors and learning spelling lists. In addition, *Exercise Your English* contains a series of quotations, mainly of an improving nature, on which pupils are asked to "write a short paragraph explaining what this means:"

"Hope is a good breakfast but a bad supper."

"Learning by study must be won;
'Twas ne'er entailed from son to son;"

"Men's muscles move better when their souls are making merry music."

The wonder is that the publishers saw fit to reissue, in 1977, this truly deadly compilation. An edition for teachers, with key to exercises, is available.

RICHARD BENNETT,
Elgin Academy.

Remedial and Reluctant Readers

Knockouts
Longman.

Save the Last Dance for Me and other stories
Jan Carew, 40p, cassette £3·50.

Stranger than Tomorrow
Jan Carew, 45p, cassette £3·50.

You Can't Explain Everything
Joan Tate, 40p, cassette £3·50.

The Robe of Blood
Kenneth McLeish. 45p, cassette £3·50.

Luke's Garden
Joan Tate. 50p.

Tracker Books
Transworld Publishers Ltd.

Skyjacked
Stephen Leslie. 45p.

Codebreaker
Stephen Leslie. 45p.

Knockouts is a series of paperbacks for poor and reluctant readers in the age range 11-16. Although not written to a lexical or semantic formula, they are staged in levels of difficulty, the lines in the lower level books being broken into sense patterns. The levels are on a scale of 1-5, rising in complexity and readily discoverable through their different coloured backs and spines: Level 1, Blue; Level 2, Red; Level 3, Magenta; Level 4, Green; Level 5, Black.

Save the Last Dance for Me (Red) is a slim collection of four stories touching on the supernatural, which have in common a subtly chilling character.

"The House" . . . A young man inherits a small place in the country. When he gets there he finds a bearable amount of dereliction, and a ghost dog, of all things. The hero's fiance comes for a stay, but something wants him, alone. The girl is terrorised by a series of nocturnal barks and growls. And then there is the fire. Escape is made in good time and the blaze is a small one. The barking of the dog saved their lives. The girl leaves. The young man stays. There is something about the place. He recognises it.

"Save the Last Dance for Me." . . . A boy and girl meet at a disco, and they find they have a chemistry all of their own. However, when it is time for the last dance she excuses herself and rushes off. The lad is confused and disappointed. He finds out that she had a boyfriend killed in a motor bike accident and that her name is Shelley.

Next week they get together again and she confesses that she is afraid to have the last dance. Her late boyfriend warned that he would kill her. However she finds reassurance in his arms, where she remains through even the last dance. At the end she goes for her coat while her new love waits . . . and waits. Someone remembers her leaving . . . on a motor bike. They find her lifeless form on the road next morning.

"Outside Chance." . . . in this story a young fellow, down on his luck, finds tomorrow's newspaper. Smartly he thinks of the killing he can make at the races. He wins £4000. Ironically the "stop press" carries details of a disastrous factory fire, in which his father perishes along with many others. He could have prevented it.

"Through a Glass Darkly." . . . Janet and Tony are happily married and love raking around old shops. Tony seems strangely compelled to buy an ugly old mirror, and once they get it home the trouble starts. Tony's friend, Jeff, dies. Instead of sorrow, Tony shows delight. He will inherit Jeff's job. When Janet finds live wires led to her bath, she smashes the mirror, for she has recognised its evil. But the evil does not die. It selects a new host. Janet decides to kill her husband. That's a really creepy ending.

Stranger than Tomorrow (Red) is concerned with the world of the future. In "The Soundmaker," the first of three stories of the future, we have a world of state control, total state control. People are made to feel happy or sad simply upon the hearing of a sound. There are tapes to control every mood. Our hero works with the soundmaking administration but one day finds a pianola. He is curious about music, that unpredictable medium and feared taboo, and makes a tape of it. When he feeds it into the system for all to hear, the chaos is short lived, and only serves to earn our hero a brainwashing. In "This Planet is Hostile," a space expedition is wiped out by bands of the native population. While the last spaceman dies in a pool of yellow blood, someone says, "Talk about the Thing from Outer Space! This beats any horror film I ever saw." Whereupon we gasp, realising the planet to be our own foolish Earth.

In "Greenfingers" our future world is short of food and the state starts mucking about with ways of increasing crop yield. The plants start eating live creatures, like cats and people, but the state can handle it. It will destroy all plant life.

Since the state keeps its hold on the people (I am presuming) by controlling the issue of food, the people almost welcome the coming famine as a chance to win back their freedom.

Stranger than Tomorrow is a clever book with much that adults or more able children will appreciate. Poorer readers often lack the imagination to enjoy science fiction, and I find that they stay clear of them. However, a skilful teacher with a good cassette can succeed.

You Can't Explain Everything (Magenta) contains two stories whose heroes are enabled to know more than is healthy for them. In "The Wooden Man," Joe finds an oddly carved wooden figure. It can tell the future. He tries it out on a football match which has still to take place. He thinks of one team at a time and waits for the figure to respond. It heats up at the mention of one team and stays cold for the other. The former wins. After that it tells him about many things he wants to know.

Joe catches a chill and lies in bed for some time. When he starts to feel a bit better he goes for the wooden man. What is he going to do when he gets better? The man stays cold. This frightens Joe. It surely means he is not going to recover. He is going to die. The wooden man warms up to confirm it. So Joe tells his parents, but they pooh pooh him, and his mum throws the figure into the fire.

Joe gets better. But what if his mother had not . . . ?

There are questions one would wish to ask, but you can't explain everything.

The second story, "Bubbles," is about the thought bubbles above people's heads in comics. For a day, Tess actually can read minds by seeing large white bubbles above people's heads. Sometimes she is flattered by what people think of her. At other times she is not. In fact she decides she dislikes the bubbles' blunt truths and is relieved when, next morning, they are gone.

Another clever book which I am sure poorer readers will like.

I know that children will enjoy *The Robe of Blood* (Magenta). We begin with Agamemnon returning home after ten years "obliterating" Troy. His wife bears the kiss of death, for her lover cleaves the head of Agamemnon three times with an axe. We pass on to Icarus, one of the builders of the maze of Minos. As they leave for home, Minos stops them. They hold the secret of the Maze and cannot be allowed to escape. They build wings from wood, feathers and wax and escape. Icarus is immature and flies too high. Of course the Sun melts his wax and Icarus falls to his doom.

I suppose the "all-action" nature of these stories which loses the complication and the detail and leaves only the barest stories and the action, gives these stories their power. It is through action that we hear of Oedipus, Midas, Narcissus and others, including the Gods.

In *Luke's Garden* (Green), Joan Tate has cast our hero as a boy with gentle ideas who prefers his own solitary company to that of others. His pleasures revolve round an allotment which is attached to some condemned property. He falls heir to a gnarled old rose bush and somehow coaxes from it a stream of lovely blooms, bright red and deep with scent.

He starts giving them away, eventually even to boys at school. They cruelly decide to attack Luke and stop him from being a cissy. It is done at the allotment. Confused and in pain, he makes for one of the condemned houses where he can think, and gather himself before going home. He knows the roses had something to do with it and looks out of a window at the bush. Just then, the masonry gives way and carries Luke to his death. In his hands are some rose stems which he must have clutched even through the fight.

Luke's Garden is a book for everyone. Poor, unsuccessful pupils may, like him, be loners always being misunderstood. Others may see themselves as the victims of injustice.

I feel it is unfortunate that there cannot be more illustrations in the Knockout series. One reader whom I know, would ask for a change of book if he was suddenly confronted with a sea of double paged print. More children than we realise need illustrations to sustain their interest and concentration.

The cassettes should be used as much as possible. They have excellent quality.

The Tracker Books, *Skyjacked* and *Codebreaker* are thrillers involving young people. Their novelty lies in the fact that there are several routes for a pupil to take through the books. Several pages of text end with page numbers in brackets. The reader may select one of these pages, turn to it, and continue the story.

Proficient readers will enjoy these, for they will be persistent with them. Reluctant, poor, remedial readers will simply be confused. I could produce a few confused adults as well.

G. Hogg,
Braidhurst High School, Motherwell.

What's This All About?
Bill Ridgeway. Arnold, £1·10.

Headlines 1-4
Arnold, 75p each.

Daredevils
M. Samuda.

Survivors from the Sea
R. Hunt.

Remarkable Animals
R. Hunt.

Recordbreakers
J. L. Foster.

Help!
Barbara Paterson. Penguin, £1·00.

I find it most refreshing to find, at last, a book which will be of practical use to the ordinary school-leaver. Even if all the topics in *What's This All About* are not covered, the pupil will have learned a considerable amount of information, which will be of use before and after leaving school.

The format is attractive, with a "photograph" of an article *e.g.* a motorcycle, seed packet, Marks and Spencer Care Chart, camera instructions, time-table, etc., on one page and a series of exercises, which elicit and/or emphasise points of importance related to the subject, on the other facing page.

Research is encouraged and vocabulary extended in the varied questions included in each topic.

I would recommend this book for ROSLA pupils, pupils at the lower end of the "O" level range, remedial and non "O" level pupils; for if they cover only half of this book, they will have learned many things to help them survive the onslaught of the media and live in less confusion.

Headlines does what the publisher's leaflet claims. It presents four books, each with five true stories, well set out with photographs, line-drawings and broken blocks of print.

Daredevils is the pupils' choice as best of the four—a choice influenced by the "charisma" of Evel Knievel and interest in the unusual.

Remarkable Animals was popular, for most of the pupils I see are fond of animals and love to read about them.

Recordbreakers was quite popular but might go down better with the adult of a low reading age. Webb and Shymper do not have as great appeal as Spitz and Bonnington.

Survivors from the Sea was not so popular perhaps because survival at sea is not as interesting to pupils influenced by *Jaws* and the heroes and heroines are not famous. I found the book interesting.

Personally I have only one objection to the series—the cost of each book. I kept an earlier publisher's leaflet which said the price would be *approximately* 65p each, but the books are now 75p each—1200 words, 48 pages—Are they worth it?

Help! is a very handy home, library, classroom reference book at a very reasonable cost. In the thirteen information and illustration-packed chapters, simple instructions and advice are given in a clear manner.

Subjects covered include cooking, first-aid, legal rights, sex education, job-hunting, leisure, letter-writing, budgeting, sewing, do-it-yourself. The line-drawings are clear, easy to follow and some not without humour.

There is an excellent index, conversion tables and a list of useful addresses—mostly south of the border but nevertheless comprehensive.

JUNE CRUICKSHANK,
Northfield Academy, Aberdeen.

Encounter Books 1-6
Gen. Ed. B. Carozzi. Cassell & Co. Ltd., each 70p.

First Flight
B. Jeffries, 95 pages.

Flop and Mick and John and Me
B. Breen, 95 pages.

Red Snapper Night
W. Green, 104 pages.

Debbie's Guy
R. V. Carr, 114 pages.

Under the Silkwood
H. F. Brimstead, 114 pages.

The Children of Atlantis
L. Harding, 104 pages.

It is a rare book that will interest and stimulate the 14-18+ reluctant or slow reader: the language has to sound natural to him yet must exclude vocabulary and syntax beyond his reading-level. In Cassell's new series *Encounter* I would be tempted to spend 70p each on only two—*First Flight* and *Debbie's Guy*.

The layout of all the books, with normal line-spacing and paragraphing, makes them acceptable in appearance to the authors' stated targets—the 14-18+ age-group and adult slow readers—but it is certain that the suggested minimum reading-age of 11+ or 12 is essential if reading is to be enjoyable (or even persevered-with). The black-and-white drawings, with the exception of those in *The Children of Atlantis*, added nothing to my pupils' enjoyment of the books, and in my view the illustrations should be removed to give the books more of the appearance of normal paperbacks.

First Flight is a genuinely exciting story of a young girl who finds herself alone in the air in a small aeroplane. She has always been terrified of flying, even with her boyfriend at the controls, and now she finds she is quite alone as the plane soars into the air. Tension is maintained throughout the story. No less so than my pupils, I felt compelled to read it at a sitting. It was one of only two books that one of my fifteen-year-old pupils had read independently right to the end. Normally a fairly inarticulate boy, he poured the story out to me, words tripping over each other in his enthusiasm, and finishing: "Gee, Miss, it was great!" I think the book would have appeal for the adult slow reader, too, as the plot is a fairly familiar one, used in film and on television.

The other book in the series which proved particularly suitable for adolescent readers was *Debbie's Guy*. Debbie is a teenage girl, the eldest child in a one-parent family. Father has deserted, mother is out at work, and Debbie is very put-upon. When school is over, she has to shop, cook and clean for the family and look after her two young brothers until her mother comes home. She has little leisure and no fun, for her mother has frightened away any girlfriends and will not allow Debbie to speak to boys. But one day Debbie meets Gerry. He is shopping for his widowed mother and is finding it hard. He is shy and clumsy in the supermarket. Debbie helps him with the shopping, and a satisfying friendship develops between Gerry, Debbie and her brothers. But mother must never find out. . . . She does, but the story ends happily and convincingly. Many of the girls I teach would recognise Debbie's situation and feel sympathy for her.

For the other four books I could not find such enthusiasm, and nor could the children who read them. In fact, none of the books was finished by any of the children—they "didna understand" some of them and "couldna be bothered" with the others. The reasons seemed to be particular to each book. In *Under the Silkwood* and *Flop and Mick and John and Me* there is a fair sprinkling of Australian slang in the dialogue. These children may not have been able to infer the meaning from the context, and they gave up quite quickly—they are so easily discouraged. *Red Snapper Night* is "difficult to understand," commented one boy. "I couldn't decide what it was about." In fact it tries to describe a boy's reactions to his father's disappearance and death, and his final acceptance of it. *The Children of Atlantis* is a science-fiction story. There are long descriptive passages, written in a rather high-flown style, which contrast rather oddly with the down-to-earth dialogue, and some of these passages—and the relative lack of dialogue—prevent the story from moving along at a pace to satisfy the reluctant reader. Like my pupils, I found it hard to believe in the adventures of Kris and Linder, protected as they were from all dangers by their belt-operated force-field. One child suggested that it was more like a school-book than a story.

With the exception of *First Flight* and *Debbie's Guy*, the series was disappointing. It is to be hoped that the publishers will not sell the books only as a pack of six, as many seem to do these days. Although *Flop and Mick and John and Me* might successfully be read aloud to groups, I would be unwilling to spend £4·20 of my precious requisition on all six titles.

CHRISTINE CRISPIN,
Powis Academy, Aberdeen.

Small Group Interactions

Communication and Learning in Small Groups
Barnes and Todd. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 139 pages, £2·50.

Interaction in the Classroom
S. Delamont. Methuen and Co. Ltd., 124 pages, £1·40/£3·00.

These two books, though both dealing with the classroom situation, are very different in their approach, and in their application to the day-to-day needs of the teacher. Delamont's book is quite clearly, and, at times, distractingly sociological in its approach and in its jargon, whereas Barnes and Todd take a very limited experience—*viz.* eleven hours of taped discussion among 13-year-olds across the curriculum—and draw conclusions which have real and important implications for English teachers, particularly in the light of Bullock, Language across the Curriculum, and the Great Debate.

Group Work in English has been advocated for some time now, spurred on by the Bulletins, mixed-ability classes and, not least, by the practical implications of Professor Britton's research on language acquisition and its role in the learning process. But, what exactly goes

on when as English teachers, after providing what we hope is stimulating material, we finally allow the pupils to discuss it without our being there?

Barnes and Todd taped 13-year-olds in three Leeds Comprehensive schools discussing, with only the tape-recorder as audience, a range of subjects, from "The Pearl" to "Carbon Dioxide in Water." Unfortunately the selection of children makes conclusions about mixed-ability group work invalid since "bright" and "very dull" children were excluded, the former so as not to alienate teachers working with "ordinary" children, and the latter because the authors thought it "unlikely that they would produce a sufficient volume of talk to be analysable!" Their "second phase date collection" involved pupils who did *not* come from the same class, were not used to working together, and met the researchers for the first time on the day of recording. The authors, in the introduction, acknowledge the unsatisfactory nature of this phase and justify the extraction of the pupils for recording on the basis that background noise makes subsequent transcription well-nigh impossible. However, after all of these caveats, the book really gets underway when the authors begin to examine the transcripts.

The format of the book makes it easy for the reader to make sense of ordinary pupil discussion. Transcriptions are presented in play-form with commentary and analysis running alongside each utterance. Barnes and Todd examine the amount of collaboration in group discussion, noting how pupils initiate new avenues of discussion, elicit contributions from one another, extend the discussion by building on others' remarks, and qualify one anothers' statements. The transcriptions show beyond any shadow of a doubt that 13 year olds, working in groups no larger than four, are capable of such collaboration, and the authors go on to pin-point the social skills required in group discussion. They recognise that the task itself is the strongest controlling agent. English teachers, in making up worksheets to stimulate discussion will at once accept this point, but, at the same time, be aware of the danger which Barnes and Todd outline:

> "Too strict a schedule of questions may persuade pupils that their own thinking is not wanted."

A balance between openness and directedness is what we have to find in tasks. Barnes and Todd noted also that "confidence in oneself and trust of others seems to be a necessary condition of participation in exploratory talk, and show examples of pupils dealing successfully with competition, conflict, rivalry and contradictory opinions. All of this, however, ignores the cognitive element of learning. "Collaboration is not enough; the talk must lead to the construction of new ways of understanding." The authors go on to show pupils constructing their own questions; raising new, related issues; setting up hypotheses; using evidence to support or disprove a general assertion; and expressing feelings and recreating experience.

So far, then, the authors have taken situations which many of us have set up in our classrooms, and analysed what most of us believed was going on anyway. But, is it all a hit and miss affair? Are the features which they outline at the end of Chapter 2—competition and conflict, failure to apply to the task—just as likely to happen? Statistically, no—but we need more than that, and they attempt to provide the answer by suggesting that there is ample evidence that pupils are aware of the processes gone through; in other words reflexivity, or Piaget's formal operational stage of development is evident. Pupils are seen to monitor their own thinking, are aware of alternative opinions and theories, evaluate their own and other pupils' statements in the light of new approaches, and show a quite sophisticated command of the strategies of discussion, *e.g.* providing summaries at various points, forming their own on-going agenda, concluding aspects and moving on, etc. Barnes and Todd conclude this most important chapter with the view that:

> "One of the strengths of small group work is that it necessarily faces the learner with other viewpoints different from his own."

They go on to offer the teacher who does use group work some advice on how to monitor its progress. They immediately state that "the children's relationship with the adult that sets up the small group work affects their performance in the group." In other words, group work does not mean the demise of the teacher as a major influence on the pupils. Group work is not a self-teaching method, but rather the pupils set their own standards by those of the teacher and apply them in the more natural atmosphere of the small group. The nature of the presentation of the task is regarded as important, too, so that the "class lesson," along with the teacher's questioning technique, his attitude to pupil contributions etc., all contribute to the success—or lack of it—of group work. The authors offer practical tips to the teacher who wishes to analyse transcriptions, ranging from how to transcribe discussions meaningfully to the more theoretical categories of Interaction Frame and Content Frame, stressing the idea that every utterance has both a cognitive and a social function. The aims of *Projects in Practice* "To foster the social and personal development of the child through the four communication skills" are seen in operation in these discussions.

In attempting to draw conclusions, the authors are tentative and wary. They quite rightly warn us that "we must beware of contrasting small group work with an idealised version of class teaching." They do not claim that *all* educational purposes can be carried out in small groups, but they certainly make out a strong case for its frequent use. The title of the Bullock Report—*A Language for Life*—is echoed in the modest but entirely convincing final sentence of the book:

> "If schooling is to prepare young people for responsible adult life, such learning has an important place in the repertoire of social relationships which teachers have at their disposal."

Interaction in the Classroom is one of a series entitled "Contemporary Sociology of the School." We are told in the introduction that the book will offer "rich new insights for both classroom practitioners and sociological analysis." It certainly does not do the former and, unless cataloguing all past and present research represents "insight," fails in the latter aim also.

The style is at once journalistic, flippant and pseudo-scientific in its jargon. The outlandish fictitious names given to teachers (Mrs Hodden, Mrs Milton and Mrs Keats) as well as the metaphor of the chapter headings (3. The Protagonists: the teacher; 4. The Protagonists: the pupils; 5. Let battle commence: strategies for the classroom) obscure what insights there are into the teacher's role, pupils' role; teacher talk, pupil talk etc.

The book is made difficult to read by the too frequent references to other researchers whose work is not described in any detail. One wonders about the validity of a book by Miss Delamont which has as its sources

two recent pieces of research by Chanon and Delamont and Stubbs and Delamont!

In short, it is a book of interest to the educational sociologist in which the practising teacher will find little of practical help for the classroom.

MARGO BOYD,
Claremont High School, East Kilbride.

Fiction

The Cool Web
Edited by Margaret Meek, Aidan Warlow and Griselda Barton.

The Cool Web subtitled "The Pattern of Children's Reading" is a collection of essays grouped under four headings: "The reader," "What the authors tell us," "Approaches to criticism," "Ways forward." There is also a full and useful bibliography. The essays are clearly set out with notes easily accessible in the margin. Each section and each essay has a brief introduction. It is an attractive book to read and, although large, an easy book to find one's way around in.

There is no doubt that as teachers of English we should be concerned with children's literature, a subject around which a whole industry is developing. More books, magazines, seminars, courses are appearing regularly and this particular book, because of the varied ideas and attitudes to the subject presented within it, provides a centrepoint for thought and discussion in this ever-expanding area.

Section One, the longest section in the book, is also the most thought-provoking, stressing as it does the imaginative rather than the critical faculties employed in reading. The first few essays discuss fantasy, our need for stories, and the blurring of distinctions between fact and fantasy in our lives. In "There is no such thing as a shark" Chukovsky explains that if a child is deprived of stories he will create his own fantasy world. In "Where does Cinderella live?" children are interviewed who believe that they can visit story characters.

The second half of Section One is concerned with how we read and what we read about. Different ways of approaching a book are discussed. Teachers are criticised for introducing critical analysis of literature too early. Aidan Warlow suggests a way of categorising books according to whether they are of this world or contain elements of the supernatural. W. H. Auden continues discussion of this idea in terms of our need for both Primary and Secondary Worlds. The place of tragedy, evil, fear, social realism, sex, in books for children is commented on. The final, very short, essay in this section concerns a book of very low literary merit which was nonetheless important for one child. "One can only assess its (a book's) value by the light it brings to a child's eye."

Section Two is more interesting than thought-provoking. Here well-known children's authors discuss how they write, who they think they are writing for, and what they choose to write about. The differences between writers are brought out forcefully in this section where one author's ideas may be contradicted by the next. Maurice Sendak, the only illustrator represented, speaks out strongly against illustrations in adult books, but if, as C. S. Lewis says, "no book is worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty" then where do we draw the line between children's and adults' books?

Section Three contains a selection of critical essays showing the variety of ways in which both books and authors are written about. The introduction to this section speaks scathingly of the teachers' contribution to the discussion of children's literature: "Conspicuously absent from the discussion have been the people one would expect to be most concerned—practising English teachers; as victims and agents of a system that promotes literature as an object of textual study rather than as a source of private satisfaction to the reader, their contribution to the thought represented in this volume has been negligible."

Section Four looks at the directions in which children's literature is going. There is an essay about the Centreprise Community Publishing Project in Hackney; there is discussion on books about and for black children. Edward Blishen contradicts much current teaching practice when he advocates that: "We must never use fiction formally for exercises and pieces of study of this kind." Elaine Moss, who chooses "The Children's Books of the Year" produced by the National Book League, writes sanely about the potential élitism of children's literature and the need to discard the "veil of quite unnecessary sophistication." She would like to see "more new straight undemanding adventure stories properly written." An essay later in this section would seem to echo this point when it says that "research continues to show that there is no appreciable narrowing of the gap between what the group of concerned adults see as desirable and what the children choose and enjoy."

Rather than making definitive statements about children's literature the essays tend to open out arguments and lines of thought. Some essays are trivial, some are obscure, but the majority make stimulating reading, particularly for someone who is involved in teaching. Because the essays have obviously been chosen to complement one another it is worth reading the complete book, rather than dipping into it as one might be tempted to do with a large collection of essays like this.

CATHERINE FOWLER,
Auchmuty High School.

New Windmill Series
Heinemann.

The Starting Point
J. Kamm. 135 pages, 85p.

The Haunted and the Haunters
K. Lines. 153 pages, 80p.

The Cabby's Daughter
David Martin. 136 pages, 80p.

Z for Zachariah
R. O'Brien. 192 pages, 85p.

Dark River Dark Mountain
S. Sherry. 189 pages, 85p.

No Man's Land
S. Watson. 190 pages, 85p.

What am I looking for when choosing a book for pupils—particularly those in S1 and S2? I want a story which will catch and hold the reader's attention. Above all, at this stage, I want him to get the reading bug. I want the book to be well written but in a style which is accessible, with a level of vocabulary which is within his reach. I want to find characters of depth, interest

and variety. I want ideas and situations which will provoke thought and consideration.

For the class reader, ideally, I would like all these criteria fulfilled. For the individual reader I am prepared to sacrifice some provided the pupil enjoys reading the book and would like to read another book.

I read the six books myself, measuring them against the above criteria and noting down what I thought would be the reaction of the pupils to each. I then tried the books out on 1st and 2nd year pupils. I asked each pupil on finishing the book of his choice to complete a short questionnaire which asked simply for comments under the following headings: the story itself; the characters; the way it is written; any other aspects. The results were interesting.

Starting Point, Josephine Kamm

This is an unoriginal teenage-mag romance type story about a young married couple beset with problems of money, role adjustment and the presence of a possessive mother-in-law figure. Characterisation is rather weak and shallow. I rather expected, but hoped to the contrary, that the pupils would be oblivious to the book's weaknesses. Surprisingly it was the first year reviewer who sensed the weaknesses: "Dan was a bit too babyish . . . it was written too much to Jenny's advantage." Yet the second year reviewer wrote, "A story about some part of life . . . very life like . . . could easily be real people."

Dark River Dark Mountain, Sylvia Sherry

This is an exciting yarn about a fifteen year old boy evacuated to the country in war time England. In the tale of espionage which follows he is caught up in a web of intrigue, suspicion and misplaced loyalties. The book is well written with a variety of interesting characters. I felt the pupils would enjoy it but that the younger ones might find the plot a little too complex to follow. This proved to be the case: "Written in a way that is difficult to understand," but, "exciting and enjoyable," wrote the first year. The second year had no problems, "An exciting and moving story . . . very realistic . . . fast moving yet not missing out even the smallest details."

The Haunted and the Haunters, Kathleen Lines

I was more apprehensive about this collection of fourteen ghost stories. Bulwer Lytton's "The Haunted and the Haunters" I felt would be difficult in terms of style and vocabulary. Graham Greene's "The Second Death" and Angus Wilson's "A Little Companion" I felt would be rather too sophisticated. On the other hand Algernon Blackwood's "Running Wolf," the story of a Red Indian's restless spirit, Cyril Hare's "The Markhampton Miracle," the story of a miraculous pools win, and "Gay as Cheese" by Joan Aitken, the story of a barber who could foretell the fate of his customers by "reading" their hair, I felt would appeal.

The reception was mixed. Some of the stories were "a lot of rubbish," or had "a lot of long words which made it difficult to understand." However, other stories—including the last three I mentioned—"made good reading."

No Man's Land, Simon Watson

A sort of children's 1984/Brave New World, it is the story of a thirteen year old boy's attempts to resist the sterile, concrete, dehumanised existence which a future society is evolving. His ally is the retired general who, because of his age, is due to go into a "welfare home." His adversaries include a giant robot with a mind of its own. It's a good story raising some interesting questions which I felt would be well received.

The first year reviewer wrote, "I liked it but it was hard to get into . . . the characters are not fully described." The second year reviewer "liked the story but hope the future would not end up the same."

Z for Zachariah, Robert O'Brien

This is an unlikely story, written in diary form, in which a valley escapes a world-wide nuclear holocaust. In it a sixteen year old girl, believing herself to be the last person left alive in the world, stoically sets about ensuring her survival. Then a stranger arrives. At first he seems to be a welcome ally, but soon seeks to dominate and use the girl. Eventually, wearing his "safe suit" she leaves him in the valley and sets off in search of other survivors. Her courage and resourcefulness in the face of her situation were, I felt, nothing short of incredible! What would the pupils think?

"Very possible . . . well written with a lot of imagination put into it," wrote the first year!

"I think the author has the wrong impression of girls," wrote an indignant second year girl.

Another wrote, "The characters are a bit weak . . . but the diary idea is very good—it makes the story seem more realistic." "A lot of things like a valley which is not destroyed by the war are too fantastic to be true, but they all add to the story," wrote a third. I'm inclined to agree!

The Cabby's Daughter, David Martin

Set in an Australian bush town in 1903, it is the story of a teenage girl, Bess, coping with the problems of adolescence on top of the problem of a widowed father, once a proud pony cab driver, now an habitual drinker. It was quite well written and gave some insight into character. The plot however was rather slow moving and somewhat "bitty" and I felt it wouldn't be particularly well received. In fact my solitary reviewer—there were no other takers—a first year boy, gave quite a favourable review. It was "rather much more a girl's story than a boy's," but, "altogether it was a good book."

None of these books was rejected out of hand by my reviewers, and equally, none was favoured without reservation. I was quite impressed by the range and quality of critical comment: the word "rubbish" appeared only once and the word "magic" did not appear! The pupils clearly are looking for more than a good story. They are looking, sub-consciously perhaps, for quality in character, subject matter and style as well as in plot. In the main I found that my expectations of pupil reaction were fulfilled. I would be happy to see all of these books read by individuals but only *No Man's Land* and possibly *Dark River Dark Mountain* could qualify as class readers.

JOHN BROADFOOT,
Penicuik High School.

Scottish Writing and Lindsay's "History"

A Sense of Belonging
(Six Scottish Poets of the Seventies)
Eds. Brian Murray and Sydney Smyth. Blackie, £1·50.

The first sight of a cover with the title *A Sense of Belonging* made me wonder. It smells so much of Scott's

"This is my own, my native land." Even acknowledging the inclusion of some undoubtedly reputable names in contemporary Scottish poetry, I had expectations of some overall design to present a Scottish identity—which seems to be a central tenet of faith among many Scot. Lit. protagonists.

In fact, the very title from Stewart Conn's "On Craigie Hill" points out how:

"It is hard to look
back with any sense of belonging.
Too much has changed, is still changing."

There is no questing after roots, no viewing of the present in the context of the past: rather, there seems to be a rejection by the poets of such a thing being possible at all. The scene dealt with is almost self-consciously immediate, the viewpoint un-selfconsciously personal. So the editors seem to me to have steered clear of any identity-plating of the "Chiel amang us" variety. Wisely done, this avoids any of what Tom Leonard calls "tahty scoan vibes." But the very pointing out of the rootlessness, the lack of identity, the shallow immediacy of the here and now, leaves us with a poetry which has an overall tone of doubt, sadness, numbness. In this way, there is nothing unusual about the anthology—these are features only too common in anthologies of contemporary verse, Scottish or otherwise.

The Stewart Conn poems have undoubtedly a worthwhileness. Family figures are used as a source for a personal mythology, rather in the Robert Lowell manner. Poems like "Forebears," "On Craigie Hill," "To my Father," "Reiteration" are good poems, but only at the very top end of the school would they be accessible. They deal with the theme of reaction against the past: against the family, the reputations of those now dead, their values and attitudes, the uneasiness of relationship between aged father and adult son. It is an interesting area, successfully dealt with. But seeing what has been, not with a feeling of rebellion, or even disillusionment, but only with a saddened doubt is such an adult viewpoint that only the oldest pupils could possibly identify with it.

This poetry is certainly more incisive than the considerable element of snap-shot vignette. In the Edwin Morgan section, it is done better than most, with some of his instamatic poems. But one wonders about the value of some of the poems from Douglas Dunn's "Terry Street" collection for example. Certainly the urban scene must be treated, but is mere pictorial celebration adequate treatment? I felt that here was presentation of the familiar, but with nothing of significance said about it.

These poems and the undoubtedly entertaining ones of Tom Leonard and Liz Lochhead are most within the compass of S3 and S4 whom the book is intended to serve as well as senior classes. Poems like "The Good Thief," "A summer's day," "Yon night" would be attractive for the phonetic giggle of them. Not a bad thing, even if it's something which quickly falls flat for lack of leaven. Equally, things like Liz Lochhead's "Bawd" and "Lady of Shalott" have a cabaret quality which would take very well.

The poems which I respect most in the book are Dunn's "The Silences" and William McIlvanney's "Incident." They have an unapologetic seriousness of purpose and they are poised technically with a quiet kind of eloquence and some verbal wit which is without the dreich despair of some of the other "serious" poems. More of this, I felt, would have given a greater core to the anthology, even if it would have placed it indubitably as a book to be used only at the upper end of the school.

In a way, that's what it is anyway, in spite of the blurb's claim that it will suit all levels of ability, 14-18 year old. There's far too much lachrymae rerum quality about much of the material for it to be easily swallowed except by older, able pupils. Given, then, that it would be largely used by S5, I feel it would have been better to have gone wholeheartedly towards a more thoughtful, tightly structured poetry than much of what is here.

VICTOR ASHTON,
Knox Academy, Haddington.

Collected Poems
Robert Garioch. Macdonald Publishers, 208 pages, £6·95.

Effie
Hugh Ouston. East Knockhall Cottage, Newburgh, Ellon. 16 pages, 20p.

Collected Poems gathers together in a handsome volume much of Garioch's previously published verse as well as a large selection of his work during the decade since the appearance of his *Selected Poems* in 1966. *Selected Poems* was noted at the time as having done much to bring Garioch to the attention of a wider and more diverse audience. *Collected Poems*, if not building upon his reputation, there being no significant development in the sense of breaking new ground, should nevertheless greatly consolidate and enhance it. He remains ever the impish social critic and wily satirist and his recent poetic output ranges from the pure romp to the deliberate and considered. There is evidence of a more assertive and "direct to the point" presentation in much of his more recent verse:

It's Anarchy we want, Anarchy.
End all the criminal courts, cells, the Dock,
men born free, everywhere in chains,
shut up in gaol, silenced, out of sight.
Form a new
police, called the Free People's Police.
Apprehend freedom's enemies!
Lock them up! We'll need a lot more gaols.

Yet in subsequent pages his essential humour will break out and he will indulge in a complete volte face in poems such as "Nemo Canem Impune Lacessit" which despite the grandiose title is Garioch tilting wickedly at middle class Edinbro, an activity he has relished over many years of writing:

I kicked an Edinbro Dug-luver's dug,
leastweys I tried; my timing wes owre late.
It stopped whit it wes daein til my gate
and skelpit aff to find some ither mug.

Garioch always has been, above all else, an enjoyable poet to read. His satirical verse, past and present, has never been cruel or vindictive and is inevitably injected with humour, apparent or oblique. The intricacies, foibles and vices of the Scots at all levels within society have always fascinated him, yet unlike Scarfe who as a satirical cartoonist homes in viciously on personalities, Garioch is concerned more with exposing the vices, folly and dishonesty and in true satirical tradition evoking derision and merriment at their essential absurdity.

Anyone to whom national characteristics are important, as they are to me, must do something in the matter of finding out what he thinks they are. . . .

A marked feature of the later poems in this collection is a tendency to move away from the earlier practice of rendering them almost wholly in Scots vernacular. Consequently Garioch has generated a refreshing and more realistic dimension to his social/political satirisation by blending elements of vernacular and formal English as well as exploiting contemporary Scottish idiom and colloquial speech.

As those who are already acquainted with his poetry know, there is yet another facet to Garioch's work—that of his skill in translation, as well as liberal interpretation. Here we have the already well known "Roman Sonnets frae Giuseppe Belli," as well as "Five Poems From Apollinaire," "Dithyramb frae Pindar," and amongst others a rendering of the Anglo-Saxon poem, The Wanderer ("The Traivler").

Like other poets Garioch is not above poking gentle fun at himself as Makar and in "Prometheus" amongst other poems he considers the problems of the creative artist shackled in a world of work and boredom:

Here I sit, forming craiturs in my ain shape,
a clan sib to masel,
to thole, to greit. . . .

The latter sections of the book deal with a variety of diverse topics, ranging in tone from the light and witty to the thoughtful and thought provoking. Side by side one has "Three Radio Forth Rhymes" and "Boarding-House Birthday" which explores how we are continually, even willingly assailed by horrors, misfortunes and complete trivia in the media:

What did you have for lunch?
The same heart-transplant,
burnt village, starving tribe,
steak and kidney pie,
a liver transplant for a change,
incarceration of Greeks,
defenestration of Czechs,
encarcination of smokes,
defoliation of books. . . .

In every way this volume, although expensive, is an indispensable and valuable personal acquisition for Garioch's admirers.

The North East has always been particularly fertile when it comes to spawning new Arts magazines and *Effie*, a new Scottish poetry magazine, is one such. Named after Walter Scott's Effie Deans, this attractive little publication carries fifteen poems by Anne Stevenson and William Montgomerie amongst others. The editor, Hugh Ouston, describes it as "a polomint magazine, to be enjoyed during coffee breaks and after tea. . . ." Whilst not sharing his conviction that the poems, some of which appear quite pretentious, display "that the new and the changing may be most sharply seen through the lens of the constant," one would hope that such a frail yet enterprising publication can remain alive in such a competitive market.

IAN MORRISON,
Trinity Academy, Edinburgh.

Ringing the Migrants
Jane Wilson. Rainbow Books, Aberdeen, 47 pages, 85p.

This is Jane Wilson's first collection, though several of the poems have been published before and broadcast. As befits one who teaches Speech and Drama her work is bold, clear-voiced, firmly presented. And this firmness pleases. Some poems are based on children she has known (she has also counselled delinquent children), but she deals equally with nature, places home and abroad, and with personal and cultural subjects. There is a genuine and interesting breadth of view here—"I go for Napoleons," "Ringing the Migrants," "Shore Leave in Aberdeen," "You are Coming."

I ache
for the oppressed, the trodden, yes, and all of us
in this rat-race to the cliff-edge,

she writes in "I go for Napoleons." Yet she can notice with the poet's second eye less self-flattering truths in the

small
men with chips on their shoulders, which
they take the opportunity to carve beautifully.

"Ringing the Migrants" is only superficially ornithological, though vividly and sensitively capturing the activity of ringing: the birds, trapped by man's technology and his exploitation of their trustingness reveal the strength-in-weakness of the human underdogs.

But there is no strength-in-weakness about the language. It is boldly employed, even aggressively, along with a variety of technical devices. The reader is quite bounced into the poems. Sometimes, though, one feels the language too overwhelming, the images display their muscles individually rather than serve to support the poem as a whole, so that instead of combining to convey movement the stills remain stills however brilliant, not ciné. (This may stem from that part of her which sees grammar as "rubble"). Where, however, she disciplines and is disciplined by language—as in "Spider" or "Thirst" (my favourite)—she produces very fine work. This is a stimulating and interesting collection, worth looking at both for what it achieves and what it promises.

(*Memo:* try this on budding SYS poets).

GEORGE MACADAM,
Dumfries Academy.

History of Scottish Literature
Maurice Lindsay. Robert Hale & Co., 1977, 495 pages £8·95.

Scottish literature rightly is beginning to be studied in schools today in a much more sensitive and critically-aware manner than hitherto and any book which will help further the process must be welcomed, but it has to be added immediately that only a highly-qualified welcome can be extended to Maurice Lindsay's new book. It may be uncharitable to suspect that the book's unseemly precipitation in its concluding stages was inspired by a desire to capitalise on the surging tide of nationalism in politics, to publish while the fiery cross was burning. Whatever the reason, commercial calculation, physical exhaustion, ennui—one can scarcely believe it to be ignorance—the final effect on the reader is a disturbing one which casts grave doubts on the author's credibility as both literary critic and literary historian.

The book is in six chapters which are designated by time, beginning in Chapter I with the fifteenth century and before, then allotting a chapter per century up to the present with Chapter VI, the twentieth century, enjoying the familiar appellation "The Scottish Renaissance." Within each chapter there are divisions, with the exception of the first chapter, to allow separate

consideration of verse and prose, the latter embracing fiction and non-fiction of miscellaneous kinds. An unfortunate consequence of such an arrangement into divisions within a chapter is that writers such as Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson are considered under three separate headings, as poets, as novelists, and as writers of miscellaneous pieces. While achieving a sense of greater cohesion in dealing with the development of a particular genre this tactic tends to obscure an overall impression of a writer's total oeuvre.

Most teachers will be more unfamiliar with the writers of the earlier periods of Scottish literature and Lindsay does a sound job in dealing with the literary luminaries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He takes his first major figure as John Barbour and his consideration of the fifteenth century deals almost exclusively with verse, since in the author's own words ". . . Scots prose prior to 1500 is so sparse in quantity, and so poor in quality, that it merits little more than a footnote." A good case is made out for the study of the fifteenth century writers, Andrew of Wyntoun, Blind Harry, James I, Robert Henryson, William Dunbar and Gavin Douglas. He quotes extensively from them to good effect and is especially successful in critically comparing the sensibilities and techniques of Henryson and Dunbar.

The sixteenth century is not distinguished to anything like the same extent in verse, major figures being the lyrical Alexander Scott, and the author of the long allegorical dream-vision "The Cherrie and the Slae," Alexander Montgomerie, but prose as a literary medium emerged and of particular interest are the generous quotations made from the prose works, the anonymous *The Complaynt of Scotland*, from John Knox's *The History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realme of Scotland*, and from Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*. The century was illumined by Scotland's chief, some would say only, jewel in its dramatic crown, Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* which Lindsay asserts correctly was "a very considerable achievement far ahead of anything comparable that had yet been written in England at that time."

The seventeenth century seems to mark for Lindsay the nadir of Scotland's literary fortunes with the glorious exception of the ballads and this chapter is by far the briefest in the book. It is here also that Lindsay's critical acumen begins to show distressing signs that manifest themselves more fully as the book progresses. His argument, advanced in the concluding portion of the section dealing with verse of the sixteenth century, is that the Reformation "stopped up the well-springs of Scottish art poetry" and the hiatus of the seventeenth century was the result of the "fables and fictitious lees" having been forced underground until the century of "totalitarian religious bigotry at last began to lose ground." This suppression, argues Lindsay, had begun long before the end of the sixteenth century and he cites as a typical example "the heavy-handed de-poetising of older folk-poems and poems of courtly love practised by the three Wedderburn brothers of Dundee," the perennial and ubiquitous equivalents of Grundy and Bowdler. The argument appears logical and well-founded though, one would imagine, quite impossible to maintain as the sole or, indeed, even the chief reason for the break in the Scottish literary tradition but Lindsay delivers himself bound hand and foot into the arms of the opposition by remarking with seemingly-bland insouciance in the final pages of his book when dealing with the failure of Scottish drama: "It is also partly a hang-up from the Reformation (assuming that it shaped the Scots temperament since 1560, and not that the Reformation was itself a product of the Scots temperament)." Lindsay seems quite oblivious to the enormous implications of this alternative. The whole propriety of his repeated abuse of the bogy of Calvinism, using it as a critical yardstick to beat writers who bear witness of its pernicious influence is thereby called in question. If the latter proposition of his conjectural parenthesis quoted above is once admitted then Lindsay's concern ought to have been much more with the nature of the Scottish genius, of the national character and its own peculiar vision or sensibility.

The fact that he does not at any time attempt this on any extended basis is significant for the author seems to be particularly ill at ease essaying the wide synoptic sweep, the airy uplands of speculation and theory and hypothesis (such as George Steiner in *In Bluebeard's Castle* so brilliantly achieves) but sticks doggedly to the temporal monorail he is on. The grimly chronological construction of the book eschews the possibility of suddenly exciting the reader by startling or provocative new insights and the consequent absence of a sense of fine reticulation, of borrowings and influences and cross-currents, of echoes and adumbrations, frustrates development of an awareness of a distinctively Scottish literary tradition.

With Chapter IV, the eighteenth century, Lindsay is on to much more familiar ground with its attendant advantages and pitfalls. So much more has been researched, and assimilated very often by the general reader, that the problem becomes one of selection, of how to say well what has been said by many already. On the whole the chapters on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are both dealt with in competent fashion though there are a number of criticisms that can be made of Chapter V, especially with regard to the false emphases and imbalances Lindsay is guilty of, a fault which becomes glaringly apparent in his final chapter. Chapter IV, however, traces the revival of eighteenth century vernacular poetry through the rediscovery of the Makars and the stimulating effect James Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* had on Alan Ramsay and his successors, Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns. Everything the author has to say here is solid and convincing as he is too on the post-Burnsians. In section II of this chapter he deals with Scots writing in English, James Thomson of *The Seasons* fame, John Home, author of *Douglas* (which inspired the famous rhetorical question "Whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare now?"), James Beattie, and James "Ossian" Macpherson. One serendipity of the book for this reviewer was learning of the, doubtless limited, vogue for "instructive" poems in verse, and Maurice Lindsay's choice of quotation from John Armstrong's "practical sex manual intended for the helpful instruction of married couples" gives a superb example of genteel periphrasis. In prose the century was distinguished by works of philosophy, theology and history (David Hume, Adam Smith, William Robertson), by "private" literature—journals, diaries, biography and autobiography, especially Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and in fiction by Tobias Smollett and that arch-sentimentalist Henry Mackenzie.

Chapter V, the nineteenth century, like the preceding chapter, is one hundred pages long and these are thickly strewn with names. The treatment of Sir Walter Scott is by far the finest thing in the whole book as befits the

writer who in Lindsay's opinion "is still the first literary asset Scotland possesses." In this chapter are thrown out a number of interesting suggestions and observations that should stimulate readers into action *e.g.* that James Hogg's "The Witch of Fife" is an artistically close-run rival to Burns's "Tam o' Shanter," that William Tennant's "Anster Fair" may have been a possible influence on Byron's "Don Juan," that Mrs Oliphant's best Scots novels deserve to be revived and that she is a neglected novelist of stature. Other good things in the chapter are the unfamiliar and highly-entertaining examples of the Scottish talent for parody and deflation which emerges in Hogg's amusing parodies of popular contemporary poets, his burlesque of Wordsworth quoted in the book being pat in its deadpan vacuity, and in Sir Theodore Martin and William Edmonstone Aytoun's parodies of John Gibson Lockhart's *Spanish Ballads*.

This chapter has, however, several serious shortcomings. There is a quite inadequate treatment of several important figures and crucial works, and Lindsay also fails to substantiate remarks which require more than mere assertion to be either meaningful or acceptable: Francis Jeffrey is unjustly neglected, despite his limitations as a critic; John Galt is most conspicuously underconsidered, his *The annals of the Parish* and *The Entail* being relegated to mere mention and the latter reproved as showing "an inability to construct," a stricture excused by the exigencies of the three-decker novel form that Galt wrote to and one that can be used equally validly against Dickens or Thackeray, and a stricture that in the case of *The Entail* is totally unjustified for that work surely is shot through with the debilitating effects on the human heart of thraldom to a cash-nexus mentality; on Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* Lindsay is almost perfunctory despite introducing it as "a psychological masterpiece of the first order;" Mrs Oliphant's novel *Miss Marjoribanks*, which Lindsay says is "without doubt a masterpiece" is claimed by him as having influenced George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, a remark which he fails to develop in any way, leaving the reader to speculate as to whether there is solid evidence for such a claim or whether it is a superficial subjective impression.

One appreciates that considerations of space forbid quoting all that one might like to but one wishes that Maurice Lindsay had curtailed some of his unnecessarily-long quotations, especially those made in order to elicit a rejection or negative comment *e.g.* when he quotes no less than two whole pages of Barrie's "The Courting of T'nowhead's Bell" (rather an enjoyable and intrinsically-suspenseful episode in my opinion) only to write "This is sorry enough caricature." He might then have allowed himself quotations illustrating those works which he does himself enjoy and recommend *e.g.* the *Noctes Ambrosianal* of John Wilson ("Christopher North") is extolled but not exhibited, and one would have liked too something of W. E. Aytoun's satirical prose and of Alexander Smith's collection of essays, *Dreamthorpe*. A book of this nature which will undoubtedly have wide circulation should act as often as possible as a sampler and its proselytising function can be best served by showing as well as telling, especially by focussing on what is positively endorsed.

The proneness of Scots writers to fall into "tushery or mushery" in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the fall back into a romantically-nostalgic past or recourse to a soft-centred, sentimental rural domesticity, the Kailyard, is dealt with swingeingly by Lindsay but he resorts too readily to charges of conventional pietism and sentimentalism as if these labels were in themselves sufficiently damning criticism, thereby eschewing adequate critical examination. He evinces an implacable opposition to the religious let-out as a conclusion to a poem and demands "a genuine poetic resolution" but never seems to consider that the two things are possibly synonymous. It is arrogant to assume that a soft-focus ending is a blinking of the truth and that poems that end with a spiritual bang rather than angst-laden whimper necessarily imply pusillanimity or hypocrisy on the part of the poet. It must be acknowledged that Maurice Lindsay has a tendency to use labels like Calvinism, pietism, sentimentalism, indiscriminately and this scattergun approach is but one weakness in a critical armoury that it not as finely honed as one would expect a man of letters to possess. One has already noted his recourse to blunt assertion, his seeming unawareness of self-contradiction, and to these must be added circularity of argument and critical obfuscation *e.g.* what *does* Mr Lindsay mean by this piece of critical evasiveness?

> the set piece scenes in "Marmion" give the impression of having been pre-visualised in much the same way as the scenes from the novels, the choice of the ancient story-telling medium of verse seeming almost a secondary consideration.

That is a more literate representation though conceptually as thin, of the typical schoolpupil's apprentice-work in literary criticism: "I like it because it's good and it's good because I like it." Maurice Lindsay should not deplore so readily the absence of "genuine poetic resolutions" when he himself proffers critical vapidity of this kind.

It is when one comes to the final chapter of the book, "The Scottish Renaissance," that one feels most alarmed by Mr Lindsay's failings and, distressingly, by his lack of tact. To exclude writers without comment is to exercise an author's privilege but to exclude them and add the remark ". . . in an age of transition, such as is the final quarter of the twentieth century, charlatans flourish and are sometimes hard to distinguish from the pioneers of new ground likely to prove fruitful" is to introduce, however innocently-intended, a gratuitous innuendo that those excluded might well feel aggrieved at. The list of omissions of contemporary poets, even of mention, is staggering: no Alan Bold, J. K. Annand, David Black, Stewart Conn, Robin Fulton, Ken Morrice, Stephen Mulrine, Tom Leonard, W. Price Turner, Ian Hamilton Finlay, the last-mentioned being described by Edward Lucie-Smith in his "British Poetry since 1945" as being "the most important figure in the British Concrete Poetry movement, and one of the most playfully inventive of current poets." Apparently not only prophets are not honoured in their own country.

Those poets who are included in this final chapter are dealt with quite inadequately. What he has to say on MacDiarmid is shrewd and firm, albeit miniscule all things considered, but thereafter the treatment becomes arbritrary and occasionally blatantly unfair. Sydney Goodsir Smith is given far too little consideration while the very fine Robert Garioch is dismissed in two paragraphs, Garioch who is the only Lallans-writing poet included by Lucie-Smith in his anthology because of his use of a Scots that seems "not an artificial literary language, but a natural, and indeed racy, mode of speech." Alexander Scott, to whom Lindsay's book is dedicated, is considered as being superior to Garioch in

his use of themes and forms (as if the whole thing were some sort of literary Golden Gloves!) and is given considerably fuller, though quite inadequate, treatment and Lindsay remarks that Scott's Lallans "may come to be regarded as a kind of generally-understandable norm for the late twentieth century," a value-judgment supported by the remark that Scott's best work was and is "dependent upon his handling of naturalistic language." Then follows a long quotation from Alex Scott's poem about Aberdeen, "Heart of Stone," which as a native-born and bred Aberdonian myself I can assure Mr Lindsay is no more natural to me than Sanskrit. George Bruce's "The Desert" described by Alex Scott as a "towering achievement . . . a great poem, epic in its implications" is not even mentioned. Most distressing of all is the shameful treatment of Tom Scott who is dismissed in two sentences of a cruel ambiguity with no mention made of "At the Shrine o the Unkent Sodger" or "The Ship" or "The Tree," these long poems, the "greater forms" as the respected critic Tom Crawford calls them. Crawford argues that Tom Scott is "that rare thing, a genuinely-religious poet," a sentiment substantiated by his poetry, the only thing that matters, and personalities and factionalism, like dirty washing, should not be aired in public.

One could go on enumerating the unhappy defects of the last chapter—Edwin Morgan and George Mackay Brown are both poorly dealt with because so briefly, and in one paragraph alone Mr Lindsay gets through Burns Singer, Tom Buchan, Alistair Maclean, Douglas Dunn, George Macbeth, Alan Jackson and Liz Lochhead. These added to those he has omitted amount to a formidable roll-call. In prose he doesn't convincingly make a case for David Lindsay, fails to communicate the artistry of Fionn MacColla, makes a quite unfair and critically-irrelevant remark on Archie Hind, doesn't grasp the significance of Ian Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies*, surprisingly since the book's central concern is not so much the Clearances as his bete noir Calvinism and the atrophy of the human heart it contributes to. Typical of the perfunctory, and consequently valueless, treatment so many writers receive is that accorded William McIlvanney, not a writer I at all admire, but one who deserves better than to be described as the "most promising of the younger Scots novelists" and then have it left at that.

Clearly Maurice Lindsay would have been well advised to mark out temporal and literary parameters that would have rendered this great mass of material manageable. By pursuing a chronological approach up to virtually the present day he has imposed a burden on himself of such staggering proportions that adequate in-depth critical evaluation becomes impossible. The result, sadly, is to create an effect of never mind the quality, feel the width.

When one considers the book as a whole the feature which Lindsay seems to be most reticent about is that of language. David Craig's *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* has a chapter entitled simply "Language" and in it he examines in considerable depth the vital interplay between a nation's language and its mode of thinking and feeling, the epistemological potential, so to speak, of a tongue. Lindsay equivocates on language and nowhere does he tackle in a concentrated form the relative merits of the two principal strands in the Scottish linguistic make-up. He hedges his linguistic bets but by fastening on to what he censoriously describes as linguistic dichotomy: even where to me it does not appear damaging, it would seem that a hybrid strain offends him and my opinion is that he regards braid Scots as more truly representative of the genuine folk idiom. He certainly laments the effect of the Union of 1707 on the Scots tongue without examining the positives gained by it. The specifically English nature of the contribution to the Scots tradition is not adequately evaluated and that in itself could be the subject of another book. Although quick to attach escapism or nostalgia one suspects Lindsay has an emotional attachment to what Joyce satirically referred to in the case of Ireland as the "cultic twalette."

Proof of Maurice Lindsay's confusion on the question of language can be found in his proposition that Galt's and Fergusson's works remain essentially a Scottish taste because "Both are inherently so affectionately involved with the nuances of the Scots tongue that much of their best work is not only untranslatable, but is only of limited interest to that outside majority of readers who have scant patience with what they are pleased to regard as 'dialect' writing." This seems to me loose critical thinking and to level a similar charge against Burns, who was no less "affectionately involved with the nuances of the Scots tongue" than Fergusson, or any present-day Lallans writer would show it up for the speciousness it is. On language Robert Louis Stevenson said it all when he wrote "for I simply wrote my Scots as well as I was able . . . and when Scots was lacking, or the rhyme jibbed, I was glad (like my betters) to fall back on English. . . . Let the precisians call my speech that of the Lothians. And if it be not pure, alas! what matters it?"

A gallimaufry of points in conclusion. There seems to me to be clear evidence that this book was brought to press hurriedly which is a great pity because it is a very handsome production which would have benefited from scrupulous revision and reworking. The proof-reading is slovenly and there are numerous misspellings—despoilation, stratae, prosey, In Memorium, Stevenson—to give but a few at random. Lindsay does not always supply references to all his quotations and this can be especially annoying when one is intrigued by a quotation that one wishes to follow up. Many of the biographical fag-ends of information could have been omitted, certainly those with no bearing on literary matters. The Selective Bibliography is a useful one but one notable omission is Robin Fulton's *Contemporary Scottish Poetry*. On a higher level issues which one would have liked explored in greater depth would have been the failure of the Scottish novel to allow itself to be urbanised. There seems to be ample evidence that that challenge has still to be met, not only in the novel, as witness Edwin Morgan's powerful plea in his sobering essay "The Beatnik in the Kailyard." Surely some mention too ought to have been made of the illustrious contribution Scottish writers have made in the field of translation.

I have great admiration for Maurice Lindsay in attempting such a daunting task as a history of Scottish Literature and nothing but praise for the nobility of his enterprise. Histories of literature may appear rather passé and anachronistic in an age of specialised scholarship as far as England is concerned but Scotland has not been well served in this regard. Maurice Lindsay's book deserves to be bought by all schools and to enjoy wide public use, and I would encourage all English teachers to insist on a copy being purchased for the school or department library. There is much that is valuable and entertaining in it and it provides an immense amount

of information that is unavailable anywhere else in such compact form. I wish the book well and hope that it is a success for the blemishes it has are honourable ones, got in the process of serving a literature that has much to offer and which deserves to be better known.

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Drama and Myth

Drama Cards
J. Hanratty. Cambridge University Press.
Masters of Myth and Legend
Paul Groves and Nigel Grimshaw. Edward Arnold, 1977, 96 pages, £1·20.

Attractively presented, with apt and effective photographs and sketches, *Drama Cards* have an immediate surface appeal. On closer inspection, it becomes obvious that this inviting packaging is matched by a painstaking and deeply thought-out approach on Mr Hanratty's part, and that he has sought from the outset to encourage those using his material to train themselves to seek out the true meaning behind what they say and do in the exercises which he has-devised. To say that this lesson, if learned properly, is the key to success for anyone who wishes to express himself in public—however modestly—may seem to be a re-statement of the obvious; but it is surprising how many speakers and readers who should know better fail to appreciate the fact, and, if students do so as a result of studying these cards, the project will have been justified by this alone.

The Cards are divided into four sets, commencing with comparatively simple activities such as opening doors in various different situations, but emphasis is immediately placed on the necessity of realising the setting in which these actions take place—not merely a flabby, general mental picture, but a detailed and realistic one. Thus both imagination and powers of concentration are trained and encouraged. Speech in conversation and more elaborate dialogue, use of space and more complex movement, are gradually introduced and interwoven. Dramatised interviews are dealt with, as are also the difference between characterisation and caricature. Finally, following an ingenious programme of improvised scenes, two excerpts from actual texts, one modern and one classical, are offered for intensive practical study. In his introductory notes, Hanratty has laid down, wisely, that "we do not 'role-play,' 'act,' 'pretend' or indulge in similar charadic games; instead, we become as fully involved in a drama situation as in a life situation." The "Cinna the Poet" scene from *Julius Caesar* is admirably chosen for this purpose, but I am less happy about its "modern" counterpart, an excerpt from Brian Friel's *Lovers*. Friel is an excellent playwright, but, out of context, the passage presented looks all too like the self-consciously "frank" confections so often considered suitable for adolescents today. Innocuous though it is by any sophisticated adult standards, there are still young students, even in the "hardened" seventies, who would find it embarrassing.

But all of these Cards require a sensitive guiding hand on the part of the teacher involved, and in particular the one inviting hands to "unfold like the petals of a rose" and identification with a "grandfather clock coming downstairs" needs skilled specialist assistance! The course as a whole, however, is more than worth investigation by anyone interested in the skills and beneficial influences which Drama can and should make available. Committed in the best sense of the word and most intelligently researched, it deserves correspondingly serious consideration.

Any attempt to place the great myths and legends of our heritage in palatable form before the largest possible number of young readers is to be welcomed and encouraged, and *Masters of Myth and Legend* is a collection which has "been retold in deliberately simple language, accessible to most children or suitable for reading aloud to remedial groups." Classical sources are well represented, but subject matter from Norse, German, Indian, African and Russian origins also figures prominently, and it is the latter selections which respond most easily to the authors' intentions, the Russian stories about "Ivan" being particularly successful. On the other hand, the legends of "The Gorgons" and "The Chimera," seem weighed down with detail, and there is an occasional over-loading with side-issues and information about "what happened afterwards." This impression is aggravated by the deliberate choice of short sentences of a more or less uniform length, and the result is inclined to be staccato, the bare, drained prose style giving the impression of a text bristling with "proper names." (A good attempt at an easy phonetic guide to those is, however, provided).

There are copious graded exercises: "Looking at the story again," "Further questions," and "Things to do," and a careful selection of these could prove helpful. The text is relieved by numerous illustrations of a "pop art" nature whose employment will be very much a matter of personal taste on the part of the teacher, but might "get through to pupils not otherwise likely to be attracted. In short, this is a collection most valuable as a springboard towards the arousing of interest in a branch of literature currently too much neglected, rather than as a work of literature in itself.

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African Writing

African Writing: A Thematic Anthology
P. Zabala and C. Rossell. Collins Educational, 127 pages.
Reading African Poetry: An Introduction for Schools
Robert Fraser. Collins Educational, 96 pages.

There are a number of reasons why Scottish teachers might welcome good anthologies of African writing. Writers such as Achebe, Laye, Soyinka and Ngugi are read in some Scottish schools; anthologies containing recent work of these writers and introducing the work of new writers would obviously be useful. There are also persuasive social reasons. England is facing a serious race problem. Here in Scotland the problem seems less acute, but with a growing non-white population the Scottish tradition for tolerance (of all but the English perhaps) will be severely tested. A knowledge of black writing may enable the Scottish pupil to at least question some of the cruder notions of race that he has undoubtedly picked up. Finally Scottish and African writers share a number of common concerns, particularly

in their uneasy relationship with "English" language, accents, culture, history, institutions, etc. The topics that regularly swell the columns of *The Scotsman* have their African equivalents. A comparison of the two can, I feel, give some perspective to these emotional, often irrational, and controversial issues.

African Writing and *Reading African Poetry* include work from most of the established African writers as well as that of more recent writers. They are aimed at African students in English-speaking secondary schools with the dual function of being both anthology and the "English" text book. The books are nicely presented: good quality paper; bold, clear print; a handsome African face on each cover. Each book has a number of black and white pictures showing a splendid range of faces and contemporary African scenes—no jungles, no Tarzan, not a Bwana in sight. Both books should prove useful for the teacher of English in African schools where text books in the past have tended to reflect English experience as opposed to African experience. As anthologies or as "English" text books, however, they seem to me to have certain limitations. And though containing interesting items neither seems particularly suitable for use in Scottish schools.

African Writing consists of a number of prose passages, poems, and one extract from a play, arranged under five fairly predictable headings: Conflict, Folklore and Tradition, Schooldays, Women's World, and The Ages of Man. Each heading, or topic, has a brief introduction; each item within a section a sentence or two of explanation followed by a set of five questions inviting discussion and a written response. The questions are earnestly well-intentioned but often seemed designed to elicit the stereotype view. And exception might be taken to the language used by the authors in their introductions and questions; this seems to me to be much too abstract and sophisticated for the students whom the books are aimed at.

The items chosen are very uneven in quality. There are competent, fairly interesting selections from the well-established writers; Achebe, Abrahams, Abiosey Nicol, and Soyinka show up well. There are some excellent translations of traditional material, some of which could be used in Scottish classrooms. There are also unfortunately many strident, naive and sentimental items, too naive and sentimental for the robust cynicism of most Scottish pupils. And there are a number of items where the writing is of a very low quality.

Reading African Poetry consists of fifty-six poems grouped under twelve topics: The Old Ways, The Dance, The Ancient Gods, Sun, Rain, Time etc. It contains useful comments on the poems and offers a variety of practical hints for the teacher on how to use the book; it also has the appearance of having been put together in some haste. Where *African Writing* adopts a consistent, sometimes consistently dull, approach to each item, *Reading African Poetry* is much more cavalier in its approach. Some poems have quite detailed explanations and questions, others none at all. Some words are glossed, others, just as difficult, not. Occasionally the author invites the student to do a project. By this he means any kind of response to a poem. You can find out how to make an African drum from a goatskin; the instructions are very detailed and set out in a language that would serve as an excellent model for the pupils. The language of instruction and explanation in *Reading African Poetry* incidentally seems to be much more suited to the language competence of its intended audience, than that of *African Writing*. There are six other so-called projects in which the pupils are asked to do simple things like write essays, contrast poems, write stories and poems and plays; but there are no instructions on how to do these. As a book *Reading African Poetry* has a likeable disorganised honesty about it.

But one has reservations about its value as an anthology. Too many of the poems are of a poor quality, despite the publisher's claim that it offers a selection from the best of African poetry. If this were so then one would feel very unhappy indeed about the state of African poetry in English and might wonder if all the best African poets are now writing in their own first languages. Fine sentiments are expressed, gestures are made and attitudes are struck, but these are too rarely transformed, through attention to language and form, into poetry. We are seldom surprised by the language, shocked or teased into seeing the world in an unfamiliar way, or delighted by the poet's exploitation of the potential in language. Instead there is an impoverishment of expression: rhythms fail to support, or convey, thought and feeling; words thud monotonously into highly predictable phrases; metaphors are dragged in with dour, and dogged determination.

There is a straining after an effect, often accompanied by what appears to be a conscious attempt to remember the phrasing of some English poem heard in class. Wordsworth, Eliot, Yeats, Dylan Thomas, appear to have been the great favourites in the days when the poets in this volume attended school.

One or two poems have a naive charm, particularly the translations of traditional poems, which show a clarity of line, and detachment of tone, which are lacking in many of the other poems. Some of the direct imitations of English poems are clever in the way they have adapted the English poem to the African scene. And there are some nice little poems embodying scenes of African life that would interest the Scottish reader.

To be fair the selection is meant for a particular teaching situation, and the simplicity and prosaic language of many of these poems might be more useful where the acquisition of language is of primary importance, and reading literature a means to that. But as a selection of the best of African poetry it will not, I fear, tempt non-African readers to read much further.

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Primary

Understanding Children Talking
Penguin Education, 208 pages, 90p.

Reading and Loving
L. Berg. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 136 pages, £1·20/£2·75.

Help Your Child to Read and Write, and More
D. Mackay and J. Simo. Penguin, 1976, 235 pages, £0·75.

Early Reading and Writing
R. Minovi. Allen & Unwin, 117 pages, £1·60.

Leila Berg's *Reading and Loving* is a highly personal book. She uses many illustrations from her own experiences as mother, grandmother, teacher and writer. These are described vividly and make her text lively and enjoyable reading. She lays great emphasis on the early

stages (to the extent of going back not just to the trauma of birth but to the conception of the child by a couple who feel "confident enough in themselves, in each other, and in their duality, to consolidate it all with a baby.") She writes at some length about the period from birth to five years. "Belief in yourself, joy in each other, and confidence in dialogue. Reading is concerned precisely with these things."

When she moves on to school years the author discusses the inadequacies of many reading schemes. She highlights the fact that these do not match the culture of many children and that their main characters in no way resemble "real" children. There follows an explanation of how she came to be involved with the MacMillan series: *Nippers* which, according to the authors of *Help Your Child to Read and Write More*, "created a considerable stir in educational circles because they dared to consider the quality of urban life and to depart from the cardboard figures of 'school readers' with their stereotypes pictures of families and childhood."

In the final chapters schools, teachers and colleges of education all come in for criticism as the author puts in a strong plea for the freedom of a child-centred approach. This will not prove popular with those who approve the present war cry—"Back to Basics!"

The book has neither bibliography nor index.

Early Reading and Writing by Ramin Minovi is also a personal statement for the author not only evaluates the activities and materials he describes but he allows himself comments of a more personal nature. For example: "Parents can help by not waiting until they have a grievance, real or imaginary, before they approach the school—and it is probably a good start to leave the automatic rifle and the Dobermann Pinscher at home!" This as the final comment in a chapter entitled: "How Parents can Help the Pre-School Child."

After an introductory chapter dealing with the imporance of literacy Mr Minovi asks the question: "What Went Wrong?" and discusses the problem of adult illiteracy, concluding that as children from poor backgrounds, except in rare cases, learn to walk and speak, the blame for illiteracy must be taken by our educational system.

There follows a short and lucid analysis of the basic processes involved in reading and writing. Then the author devotes two chapters to describing reading and writing in school, contrasting a small town school with one in a city. He moves on to deal with how parents can help the pre-school child and continues with a critique of various reading schemes in current use. Mr Minovi also points out the dangers of excessive testing reminding us that "Competition implies failure as well as success, losers as well as winners."

The conclusion of this book is more a summary of problems identified than a series of solutions suggested. The author suggests that there will be little improvement in our educational system while class sizes remain at more than twenty pupils. He shares the general depression evoked by present cut-backs and economies and does not hold out much hope for the immediate future.

A short appendix dealing with the Bullock Report is followed by a useful list of books and a comprehensive bibliography.

This book is intended for use with students and could provide stimulating material for discussion if used intelligently by their tutor. The author states that he also writes for all parents, teachers in school who do not have time to read research (Are there any who do?) and for that "mythical being" the general reader. I feel that his text has suffered accordingly. Primary teachers will recognise much that is familiar but could be disappointed by the lack of constructive suggestions. Parents and other lay readers might find the book confusing especially in some of the more technical passages.

There is a similar problem with the first few chapters of *Help Your Child to Read and Write and More* by David MacKay and Joseph Simo. Sentences such as "The dialect will have its own patterns of linguistic interactions and distinctive linguistic features such as phonological, lexico-grammatical and semantic structures" might deter all but the specialist reader from a book which is supposedly aimed at parents. However, readers who persevere or skip the difficult bits will be rewarded by reaching the many sensible and practical suggestions contained in later chapters.

The authors' views on early childhood experience are not unlike those expressed by Leila Berg in *Reading and Loving* but they are set out in a much more organised format. The authors quote from current theories to support their views but also include many easily assimilated concrete examples drawn from real-life situations.

There are useful lists of books for further reading and rather than isolate these in a bibliography the authors have included them when relevant to the topics under discussion. These topics include "Playing and Learning," "Making Books at Home," "The Importance of Stories for Children," the "Letter Shapes Game," the "Sentence-Making Game," and the "Word-Matching Game." There are also chapters on "Children as Writers," "Reading," "Handwriting," "the Alphabet," and "Spelling Patterns". This is a very comprehensive volume and it could be of great value to students and probationer teachers of young children.

Many of the examples quoted must have been observed in advantaged middle class homes but the authors do not ignore the disadvantaged child.

The danger in a book like this is that the over eager parent could look upon the chapters describing the more formal skills as material from which a daily programme could be drawn up. This is clearly not the authors' intention and they are at great pains to point out that such activities must not be forced on unwilling children. Instead they suggest that parents can do much to foster and support interests shown by the children themselves.

I liked this book very much and thought that it would offer helpful information to parents with children already at school as well as those struggling to occupy the amazing energy of their 2-4 year olds. It would be a good book for teachers and helpers working with young children in nurseries, play groups and infant classes. Teachers working with older children who have learning problems might also find it useful.

Understanding Children Talking is a fascinating volume compiled by Nancy Martin, Paul Williams, Joan Wilding, Susan Hemmings and Peter Medway. It is stated that this book has grown out of the ongoing work of members of the London Association for the Teaching of English.

From the start the authors emphasise the importance of talking and they have selected a variety of material to illustrate different kinds of talk: conversations out of school, "inner worlds"—monologues and dramas which seem far away from most adult utterances, work talk in school, and roles and models in which children try various roles and speak in the voices that go with them.

The main body of the text is devoted to transcriptions of these conversations and discussions.

The participants are drawn from different age groups ranging from Stephen aged two years and two months to the authors who turn the table on themselves (or is it on their unsuspecting readers?) by expressing their conclusions through the transcript of their final discussion.

This material is quite fascinating and will appeal to anyone interested in people. The authors state in their introduction that it is an "inescapable social fact that we have a universal interest in other people's lives." However this book should have a special significance for teachers and it will be of interest to all at whatever level they teach.

The real value of this book seems to me to lie in the thoughtful analysis of, and the perceptive comments on, the actual examples. It raises interesting and thought-provoking questions about whether we can get better at talking and whether and how teachers can assist this process.

This book is well worth reading and it should prove enjoyable once the reader has adjusted to the small difficulties involved in reading transcripts of real conversations.

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The Ogre Downstairs
Diana Wynne Jones. Penguin, 1977, 188 pages, 55p.
Greenwitch
Susan Cooper. Penguin, 1977, 152 pages, 50p.
Professor Branestawm's Great Revolution
Norman Hunter. Penguin, 1977, 135 pages, 45p.
Children of the Stones
J. Burnham and T. Ray. Carousel, 189 pages, 50p.
The God Beneath the Sea
L. Garfield and E. Blishen. Carousel, 168 pages, 65p.

In *Children of the Stones* a strange force holds the entire village of Milbury in its sinister grip. One disturbing incident after another soon convinces the eminent astrophysicist, Adam Brake, and his son Matthew that behind the facade of sleepy English rural life, mysterious and frightening agencies are at work.

As a scientist, Adam demands a logical explanation of the apparently inexplicable happenings in the ancient village, surrounded by its circle of fifty-three Stonehenge-type standing stones, but the more he and Matthew delve, the more alarming become their suspicions of the true nature of life among the fifty-three inhabitants, the so-called "Happy Ones." The most innocuous local traditions take on a deeper significance when seen as part of the apparent conspiracy which unites the local population with their odd greeting of "Happy Day."

Normally a gifted scholar, especially in science-based subjects, young Matthew finds himself struggling to achieve the standards of a certain group of his classmates at the local school, apparently a breed of super-mathematicians.

The answer to the mystery appears to lie in the Stones themselves, but when Adam attempts to investigate these scientifically, the effect is unexpected and devastating. . . . "He touched the rock and was completely unprepared for the sudden, excruciating pain that shot up his arm, welding his hand to the stone. He shut his eyes and gritted his teeth, trying to break the contact but it was no use. The pain seemed to pass through his whole body, transfixing him to the spot. He couldn't move, he couldn't think, he couldn't see. . . ."

Children who followed the successful television series *Children of the Stones* should now enjoy reading this book upon which the series was based.

In more frolicsome vein, Norman Hunter's indomitable hero romps his way through yet another series of catastrophic adventures in *Professor Branestawm's Great Revolution*, aided and abetted by his equally potty band of associates, Colonel Dedshott, Commander Hardaport (Retired), the long-suffering Mrs Flittershoop, Dr Mumpzanmeazle and a certain Mr Hokkibats, part-time sports commentator.

To the consternation of his household and the residents of Great Pagwell, Branestawm invents a machine for locating lost property (even if not yet lost), a device for making omelettes out of everything, edible or otherwise, a portable car-park, automatic Christmas decorations and a splendid tank capable of withstanding any deadly attack save the throwing of home-made marmalade.

From Primary 3 onwards, devotees of the accident prone inventor will relish this further hilarious saga of disaster resulting from his fantastic, but well-intentioned creations.

Greenwitch by Susan Cooper is the third book in a series of five stories concerning the adventures of Jane, Simon and Barney in the Cornish village of Trewissick, but it may be read and enjoyed on its own, as ample reference is made to the events of the previous two books.

The making of the Greenwitch, a leaf-woven image which is thrown into the sea, forms part of an old spring rite with only the women folk of the village present. Jane, particularly, is perturbed by this weird, powerful figure linked with ancient tradition and she is so deeply moved by its apparent loneliness that she makes a wish on its behalf with far-reaching repercussions.

Together with eleven-year-old Will, the last of the Old Ones, and Great-Uncle Merry, who has a curious affinity with Will, the three children hope to recover the precious golden grail, stolen from the British Museum by the powers of the Dark, and to decipher the puzzling inscription on its side.

Boys and girls of upper primary stages should enjoy this enticing combination of all the elements of a good adventure story—danger, more than a hint of the supernatural and children playing a major role in the downfall of the forces of evil.

The Ogre Downstairs by Diana Wynne Jones deals with the trials involved in combining two families of children under one roof when Jack McIntyre (the "Ogre"), father of Malcolm and Douglas, is married to Sally, the mother of Johnny, Caspar and Gwinny.

In an attempt to reconcile the warring factions, the Ogre presents Malcolm and Johnny with an expensive chemistry set apiece and their far-fetched experiences begin.

The dialogue consists predominantly of the loud insults bandied back and forth between the rival "families" and the enraged bellowings of the Ogre in justifiable retaliation.

After a reasonably good start, the story degenerates into a dreary catalogue of unappealing fantasy, since the experiments with the chemistry sets are neither convincing nor particularly amusing.

I would seriously question the attitudes of any of the characters in this story, but with regard to the antics of the five nauseating children, my sympathies are entirely with the "Ogre!"

As winner of the Carnegie Medal for Children's Literature, *The God Beneath the Sea* by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen has already been sufficiently lauded elsewhere, but let me add a personal tribute.

From the opening chapter, describing the spectacular fall of the mis-shapen Hephaestus from Mount Olympus, and throughout the entire book, the reader is held spellbound by the author's brilliantly dramatic re-telling of the ancient Greek myths, cleverly encased within the framework of the legend of Hephaestus, the God beneath the sea himself.

In addition to the large easy to read print of the Corgi/Carousel edition, I should like to recommend most highly the inspired black and white illustrations of Charles Keeping which lend an extra dimension to the continuous narrative. These drawings, like the language and imagery of the book itself, are powerfully evocative and somewhat erotic.

In fact, generally speaking, I should say that this book is fairly strong meat for the younger reader. It could successfully be used for group study purposes with more able readers of about Primary 6 onwards, with no upper age limit.

My own regret is that my own introduction to the realms of Greek mythology had not been through the fascinating pages of Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen's highly original adaptation.

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Beyond the School

Working Class Youth Culture
Geoff Mungham *and* Geoff Pearson. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £2·75.

Education After School
Tyrrell Burgess. Penguin, 80p.

The editors of *Working Class Youth Culture*, a 150 page collection of articles dealing with various aspects of working class children's views on society, have consciously attempted to offer "an alternative viewpoint to the law-and-order lobby which treats the youth question as a dreadful pest to be exterminated or caged in." And in fairness it must be said that the book does try, with varying degrees of success, to live up to this promise.

The inevitable problem encountered with a book of this type is that the quality of the individual contribution is very uneven. Indeed the titles of some of the articles give a good idea of this: "Youth and Class;" "Paki-bashing in an E. Lancs. town;" "Beyond the skinheads;" "Youth in pursuit of itself." Two of these titles, without any reference to the text show up one of the major flaws in the book for a Scottish reader, *i.e.* that while the contributors are frequently interesting in an esoteric way, much of what they are examining is not to be found in *Scottish* working class children. Not, I agree, the fault of the editors, who after all are only concerned with the Midlands—but only certain chapters (Mungham's excellent review of sexual moves at dances and the establishment of the "necking order" among the girls in "Youth in pursuit of itself;" and David Wall's attempt to examine the reasons for the decline in the football magazine and the corresponding rise of the "pop mag") do make useful general observations. Though even here it should be said that the extensive use of sociology jargon obscures and ridicules sensible comment. A typical example "... the end-of-the-dance pick-up situation contains all the elements of a fascist universe" would seem to belong more aptly to page 5 of *Private Eye* than to a serious document. This is rather an unfortunate trend throughout the book.

The only other problem the articles bring up is again one which most teachers are aware of—children enjoy "kidding-on" middle-class sociologists who ask them leading questions. For example, I find it hard to accept that any significant group of working-class children use marijuana and LSD on a regular basis to *supplement* their intake of alcohol as one contributor was told and apparently believed.

If we accept these problems as being part-and-parcel of this kind of book, then it must be allowed that it can be useful to the teacher who is unsure what the values and interests of his working-class ROSLA children might be. (Incidentally, it is unfortunate that the authors seem to equate "working-class" with "unintelligent"). For most teachers, the book very usefully, once the verbiage is macheted away, puts down in black and white the kind of conclusions that most teachers had already come to about a section of their pupils. In that this had not been done before in any real sense, the book is to be given a qualified welcome.

In his valuable book, *Education After School*, Mr Burgess draws on his considerable knowledge of international educational systems to highlight some of the glaring deficiencies in British post-school education. The main platform adopted by the author is that of many reports in the last thirty years—that the tertiary level of education is still too much a middle-class preserve. He spends much of the book making a careful and interesting analysis of why this should still be the case after the introduction of comprehensive education and the upgrading of the FE colleges and Technical Schools to supposed parity with the Universities. His conclusions, while not startlingly new, seem to be devastatingly accurate—that government is basically more concerned with the *planning* of higher education than with its *purpose*.

Mr Burgess devotes a large part of his book to an examination of the ways in which the traditional University system has consistently dominated the thinking behind school and FE/Technical Colleges, in that school exams (Highers and A-levels) are designed to be University entrance exams and have little relevance to the vast majority of the pupils who sit them, and that the FE colleges are still considered as inferior institutions to university by both schools and their pupils. He attacks the autonomy enjoyed by the Universities and their general non-accountability to either their students or the public at large. The pursuits of a nebulous "excellence," he says, is a clever way of concealing a lack of self-criticism among the professional mafia. Admission to University and the granting of degrees depends more on the law of supply and demand than on the pursuit of "Truth."

The book does not really, as the jacket blurb screams, "show how it (*i.e.* restructuring the higher education system) can be done." But it does give a concise view of how it is *not* being done at the moment. It presents rather a series of options—the most interesting of which would result in fundamental changes in the schools as well as the upper rungs of the educational ladder.

Anyone interested in where education in this country is going is strongly urged to have this book on their shelves.

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